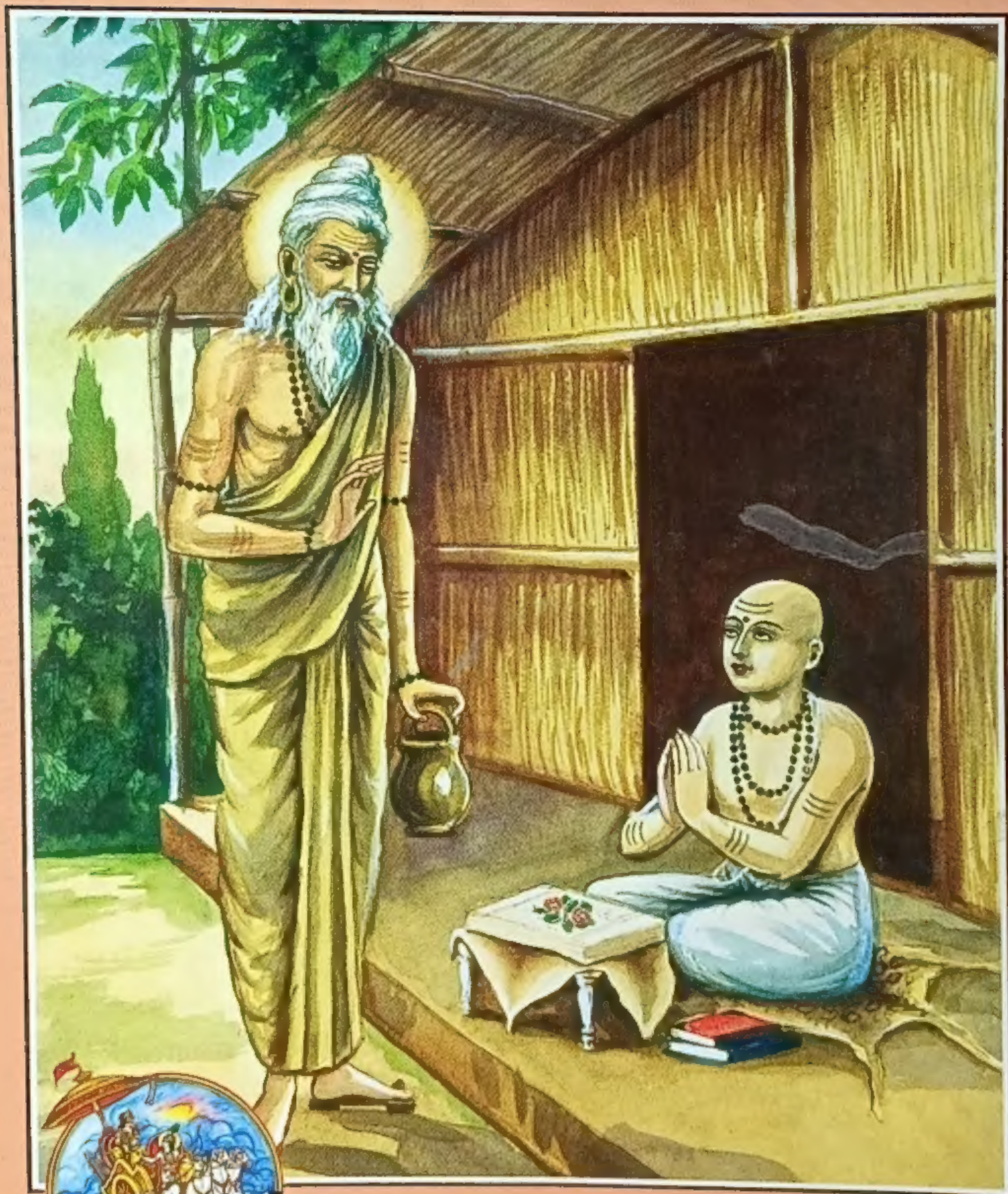


॥ Shri Hari ॥

477▲

Gems of Truth

(First Series)



Jayadayal Goyandaka

॥ Shri Hari ॥

Gems of Truth

(First Series)

tvameva mātā ca pitā tvameva
 tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva
 tvameva vidyā draviṇam tvameva
 tvameva sarvaṁ mama devadeva

By

Jayadaya! Goyandka

(Translated into English by the Editorial
 Staff of 'The Kalyana-Kalpataru')

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INTRODUCTION

The present age is marked by the growth of rank materialism, which is subversive of true happiness. People have begun to regard God and religion as superfluous and openly indulge in all sorts of blasphemy. The doctrines of rebirth and life after death are being held as figments of the brain. Talks of Self-realization, cultivation of other-worldliness and practice of devotion, etc., are declared as useless and nothing but impediments to the progress of the nation or community. Material advancement is recognized as the summum bonum of human existence. Gratification of the senses is looked upon as the highest form of bliss. Practically the whole field of literature is being flooded with books intended to advance the material interests of humanity, novels and romantic stories and erotic poems couched in flowery language and tending to promote a vulgar taste. In such an age books of an ontological nature dealing with devotion, dispassion and disinterested action are little calculated to satisfy the general public. Nevertheless, my experience of the past fifteen years leads me to believe that even this furious storm of unbelief raging all-round in the world has not been able to shake the solid foundations of the grand edifice of spirituality raised on this sacred land of Bhāratavarṣa by the sages and seers of old, and it is very unlikely that they would ever be shaken. In the spiritual environment of India genuine seekers of truth and aspirants of a devout temperament are still to be found, even though their number has dwindled. Under such circumstances it would not be unreasonable to hope that this philosophical treatise written

in a lucid and homely style will be read with wide interest and people will derive special benefit from it.

The writer of this small volume has a very high place in my estimation. such exalted souls are rarely to be found in the spiritual world. The divine sage Nārada says in his 'Aphorisms on Bhakti':—

महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च ।

'Exalted souls are not so easy to find; they cannot be recognized as such, even if found; and once found, they are sure to benefit those who come in contact with them.'

To my mind, the author of this treatise is one such exalted soul as have been little understood or recognized by the world. And there is little wonder that such a person should not be recognized. A simple and unsophisticated soul, who from his general talk may be easily taken to be uneducated and uncultured, and who lives like an ordinary householder carrying on business transactions, can be hardly recognized as a spiritually advanced soul. It may, however, be submitted in this connection that whatever has been stated above represents my own personal estimate of the writer. It is not my intention to force this view on the mind of the readers, nor does the author himself seek to do so. Nay, whatever I have written about him here, was not only written without his permission but was not even shown to him before it was sent to the press. Had I sought his permission in this behalf, I am sure he would never have granted it.

The present compilation is a collection of a number of his articles, originally written for the Hindi 'Kalyan' and subsequently translated and published from time to time in the 'Kalyana-Kalpataru'. In rendering the articles,

utmost care has been taken to keep intact the spirit of the original: nevertheless it cannot be definitely said how far it has been preserved. For the articles are interspersed at places with ideas, so abstruse as to make it exceedingly difficult for the translator to reproduce them correctly in a foreign language like the English. Under such circumstances it should not be wondered at, if some minor deviations, though unwittingly made, are discovered here and there from the spirit of the original.

With these few words of introduction I recommend this volume to the English-reading public in the hope that they will read it with interest and assimilate whatever they find useful in it. On behalf of the translators I tender my sincerest apologies for the many shortcomings of the translation. Similarly, on behalf of the publisher, I humbly apologize for any misprints that may have inadvertently crept in the volume.

Hanumanprasad Poddar
EDITOR, 'KALYAN'



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The Greatness of God

**God is not a mere imagination (कल्पना)
but an indubitable Reality**

There are some people who hold God to be a mere imagination; but a careful thought would betray their ignorance in respect of the true nature of God. God is not something imaginary like a castle in the air. That which is imaginary (कल्पित) is false (असत्य) and that which is false cannot stand the test of reason. It is liable to appear and disappear; though visible, it cannot abide in one particular form and is constantly undergoing transformation. On the other hand, that which is real (सत्) is not liable to appear and disappear. It is always beginningless, abides in one form and is not subject to change.

If that which is real appears otherwise to anyone, it is due to an error on his part. This, however, does not detract a jot from the reality of that substance. For instance, if the moon appears yellow to some one through a defective vision, this does not make the moon yellow, because the moon is always pure white and free from yellowish tinge.

That which is existent (सत्) is never otherwise (असत्). That alone is real which never ceases to exist. In the Bhagavadgītā Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa defines (सत्) as follows:—

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

(II. 16)

“The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be; the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of truth.”

The only real substance is God, who is knowledge and bliss combined and is called by several names such as Paramātmā, Parameśwara, Brahma, Puruṣottama, Allāha, Khudā and so on. He does not change even though everything else may change. That, in which all changing substances exhaust themselves, that, which is characterized as an eternal and indubitable truth and which is the witness of everything is recognised as God. That which is not negated even though repudiated by reason, and which is concluded by the wise to be real, is God. He is also called the Intelligent Power or the Intelligent Principle.

The universe consists of two substances, the spiritual or intelligent (चेतन) and the material or non-intelligent (जड). They are also known by the names of Puruṣa (Spirit) and Prakṛti (Matter). The spirit has been further divided into two sub-heads, viz., the individual soul (जीवात्मा) and the Universal Soul or Oversoul (परमात्मा), the former being a part and parcel (अंश) of the latter. Whereas the individual souls are numerous, the Universal Soul is one. This universe, consisting of twenty-four fundamental principles or categories, has evolved out of matter.

महाभूतान्यहङ्कारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च ।
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः ॥

(Gītā XIII. 5)

“The five subtle elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth), the ego, the intellect, Primordial Matter, the ten organs, the mind and the five objects of sense (sound, touch, colour, taste and smell).”

That which is material lends itself to our perception (दृश्य). That, on the other hand, which is intelligent is the Perceiver (द्रष्टा). They are also known as the knowable (ज्ञेय) and the knower (ज्ञाता) respectively. The knowable is dependent on the knower. The Lord has said:—

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥

(Gītā X. 42)

“Or, what will you gain by knowing all this in detail, Arjuna? Suffice it to say that I stand holding this entire universe by a spark of My Yogic power.”

That which is material (जड़) is finite, while the Spirit is infinite. Matter is liable to appear and disappear, while the Spirit is unborn (अज), eternal (नित्य) and imperishable (अविनाशी). Matter is always in a state of flux. That is why it is also called ephemeral (क्षणभंगुर). The Spirit never undergoes any change. The changes in Matter are mistaken by the ignorant as occurring in the Spirit, due to its contact with Matter. But on careful investigation the changes appearing in the Spirit are not substantiated just as the existence of threadlike streaks of light like the plumes of a Peacock, appearing in the sky due to a defective eyesight, is not confirmed.

The fact that God is an indubitable reality and not a mere concept is borne out by all scriptural texts. The anecdotes relating to Dhruva, Prahlāda and other such devotees establish it beyond doubt. Events like the appearance of the Lord in the form of a Manlion (नृसिंह), His killing Hiranyakaśipu, rescuing and instructing Prahlāda and revealing Himself in the woods before Dhruva and the fruition of the benediction conferred upon him in the shape of his installation on the paternal throne and his becoming well-versed in the scriptures without receiving regular instruction, merely as a result of the touch of the Lord’s Conch, cannot be reconciled with the theory of treating God as a mere concept.

Similar stories are narrated at several places in the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the old Chronicles (the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata) and the Purāṇas alike. They are all authentic stories, historical facts and not mere figments of

fiction. It is the height of folly to regard them as fibs of the type found in novels. It could not have been possible for stories, not representing facts, to enjoy such popularity and to filter through the sieve of remote antiquity down to the present day in the form of authentic history.

Even in the recent past, have flourished a number of devotees and saints in the person of Sūradāsa, Tulasīdāsa, Tukārāma, Narasī, Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Mīrā Bāī. The existence of God as well as many incidents connected with His appearance in a tangible form, are proved by the writings of the aforesaid holy persons. To disbelieve in the life-history and sayings of these personages, is to betray one's folly. Our faith in God is gradually strengthened as we ponder over the incidents in the lives of these saints. To discredit such selfless and truthful persons and to allege that they gave currency to these stories with a view to deceive the world, amounts to vilifying them. In the eyes of those who stigmatise such persons, there is no one worthy of credence.

Besides the testimony of these persons, there are several other convincing arguments in favour of God's existence. Careful thought would reveal the fact that even birds and beasts, to say nothing of human beings, proclaim the existence of God. When a man proceeds to belabour a dog with a cudgel, the dog yelps from a distance as soon as it sees the cudgel. Even before it receives a blow or sustains an injury, the sense of impending danger sets it crying. It gives the alarm in the hope of averting the coming danger. It feels sanguine that some protecting hand would surely come to its rescue on hearing the alarm. We often see that the dog is saved thereby.

That Benevolent Power whose protection against all danger sentient and insentient beings invoke through piteous

wails, and which relieves their affliction is recognized by us as God.

Even those who do not believe in God, when in serious trouble, make piteous appeals to some invisible power for relieving their distress. The power with whose help they seek to remedy the evil, to whom they bow in all humility and reverence and who readily responds to their piteous calls—that intelligent, merciful power, the refuge of the helpless, surely deserves their gratitude and recognition as God.

Even to the present day the efforts of those who repose faith in God and take refuge in Him have been, and are, crowned with success. It is not possible for something, which is non-existent to be proclaimed as existent. Even if it is proclaimed as such, the belief cannot hold the field for any length of time.

Every phenomenal existence has surely got some great power behind it. One can reasonably admit change in phenomenal existence, but not its negation (अभाव). For that which is non-existent cannot be brought into being. That which sustains the whole universe, nay, which may be called its ultimate cause, should be recognized as God. For every effect has a cause behind it. No effect is observed without a cause: nothing can subsist without a support. Hence that which is the support (आधार) and ultimate cause (मूलकारण) of the whole universe is God. He is intelligent (subjective), for that which is material (objective) has not the capacity to distinguish a thing and to operate it according to certain fixed laws and to keep it under control. God is not only proved by reasoning (युक्ति) and scriptural testimony (शास्त्रप्रमाण), but is also visible (प्रत्यक्ष). For those who have endeavoured to see Him have had, and still have His vision. Even now anyone who may like to see Him can do so by

following certain precepts. By following the methods of those who have had His vision one can see Him. Of course, it is essential to put in the amount of effort that is necessary for attaining such a priceless object. Ordinary endeavour is required for attaining an object of ordinary worth, while extraordinary effort is necessary for attaining an extraordinary object. Should anyone like to see His Majesty the King of England, he can do so by making effort in that direction after going to England. Even if he is not able to do so for some reason or another, he should at least be able to know that the King is in England, for such is the report of those who have had an interview with him and the administration is also observed as being duly carried on under his commands. Similarly, if anyone likes to interview the Supreme Lord of countless universes he can do so by putting in efforts commensurate with His greatness. It is not always possible to have an interview with a king whenever one likes. One may or may not have it, for earthly monarchs are generally selfish and are not inclined to grant interviews unless their interests are served thereby. But the Almighty, who is friendly and kindly disposed to all by nature, has made it a rule to grant interviews to those who may like to see Him. He has said in the Bhagavadgītā IV. 11:—

‘ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।’

“Arjuna, howsoever men approach Me, even so do I seek them.”

If a man gives up his efforts without having an interview with a king, the efforts, made up till now, go in vain; but the least endeavour that one makes to obtain a vision of God does not go in vain (नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति). ‘The efforts that are directed towards realizing God are not lost’. A vision of God is also different from an interview with a monarch (आश्चर्यवत् पश्यति कश्चिदेनम्). That which is intuitively perceived

is quite distinct from that which is cognized through the senses conjoined with the mind and intellect. For the outer senses (बाह्येन्द्रिय), nay, even the inner senses (अन्तःकरण), finite as they are, cannot determine the reality of an object, just as an aeroplane or a bird flying very high in the sky cannot be perceived with the naked eye; or the collyrium applied to one's eyes, cannot be seen even though it is in close proximity to the eye; or the stars, even though always present in the sky, cannot be observed during the daytime, overshadowed as they are by the dazzling rays of the sun, and the sun is not seen at night, screened as it is from our view by the earth. Just as it is sheer folly to deny the existence of all these merely because they are not visible to the naked eye, it is equally preposterous to deny the existence of God merely because He is not visible to us who are deficient in intellect and lack in faith and devotion. Though the sun's rays are always laden with moisture, its particles are not seen by us, minute as they are. Again, we cannot perceive certain objects on account of some defect in our sense-organs. For instance, one who is deaf cannot hear a sound (शब्द) and one who has lost his vision cannot cognize colour (रूप). Our senses are unable to distinguish even homogeneous substances that are promiscuously mixed together. One cannot distinguish and separate a goat's milk from that of a cow after the two have been mixed together. Similarly there are other substances which defy our senses. For instance, all of us are endowed with mind and intellect; but their existence is not perceptible by our senses. Even the knowledge derived through our mind and intellect is limited and open to correction. We recognize a particular person, with the help of our mind and intellect, to be virtuous (धर्मात्मा). Shortly afterwards we revise our opinion about him and begin to look down upon him as a sinner. Suppose

a priest is giving us a religious discourse and a large audience is present to listen to his sermon. Everyone of those listening to him, forms a different opinion about him. After the discourse is over, the listeners begin to exchange their views about the priest. One of them brands him as a hypocrite (दम्भी), because according to him the priest simply sermonizes and does not practise the virtues which he preaches. Another does not share the view of the first, but simply calls the priest a selfish man because the latter gladly accepts presents offered to him. A third one contradicts the second and says that the priest does not sermonize with the object of receiving presents, although he concedes that the priest covets honour and homage. There is a fourth who disagrees with all the three of his friends and thinks that the priest has to accept presents as well as honour simply to please his disciples while, as a matter of fact, he sermonizes because he thinks that a discourse on God, even though meant for the audience, will also have the effect of purifying his own soul. His opinion is therefore clearly this that the learned priest sermonizes for the good of himself as well as of others. Another man who is a very pious soul is of the opinion that the priest is the very embodiment of benediction (कल्याण) and that all his activities are directed towards doing good to others.

Thus we see that different persons hold different opinions, according to their respective turns of mind, about one and the same activity of one and the same individual at one and the same place and one and the same time. It is just possible that the opinion of one of them may be correct; but at the same time we shall have to admit the fallacy of the others' judgment. It is thus conclusively proved that a judgment arrived at with the help of the mind and intellect, cannot be regarded as correct.

A certain individual has a leaning towards a particular religion; but shortly afterwards he begins to entertain a dislike for it and a liking for another. This proves that a conclusion arrived at with the help of the mind and intellect, so long as they are not purified, cannot be regarded as correct. Even the most clever people find themselves at their wit's end in these matters, to say nothing of an ordinary individual. The opinions of those alone are correct who have a pure mind and who have realized God through their own self. So long as they do not realize God, the ignorant people are haunted by several doubts even in respect of the eternal existence of their own self. There is no wonder then, that they should entertain doubts about God, this and the other world, the scriptures and saints.

Doubt, speculation, faith and conviction etc., have the mind and intellect as their seat. Because the mind and intellect are changeable, faith and opinions also change from time to time.

In dreams which are occasioned by a disturbed sleep one sees different kinds of objects and regards them for the time being, as real and manifest (प्रत्यक्ष); but he begins to call them unreal when he wakes to find them totally absent. Similarly, in our waking life we mistake unreal objects to be real, through ignorance (अज्ञान). That is why, so long as our mind and intellect are not pure and steady, the inference and conclusions arrived at with their help are not correct.

As compared with the objects whose existence is proved by the intellect, the vividness of objects intuitively realized by the self, is superior. For instance, a man knows about himself that he certainly exists. This conviction of his does not cease at any time, past, present or future, in any of the three stages of his life, viz., waking life, dream

and sleep, and in any of the three bodies, the physical (स्थूल), the astral (सूक्ष्म) and the causal (कारण). That alone is true (सत्) which exists forever. Our own self is externally true because it persists at all times. And the experiences of this alone are true. Direct realization of God is possible only through the self. It is only when the self is detached from the mind and the intellect and attached to God that the latter is truly realized. That is true realization. It does not admit of error. That is why the vividness of intuition is regarded as superior to that of a perception arrived at through our mind and intellect. Those who have truly realized God say like that.

Notwithstanding the fact that all the three bodies in all the three stages are constantly undergoing change, the soul continues to remain immutable (निर्विकार) and uniform (एकरस). Similarly the soul does not change, while changing bodies in rebirth:—

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

(Gītā II. 13)

“Just as boyhood, youth and old age are attributed to the soul through this body even so it attains another body. The wise man does not get deluded about this.”

The Lord says in the Bhagavadgītā:—

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वापि भुञ्जानं वा गुणान्वितम् ।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः ॥
यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ॥

(XV. 10-11)

“The ignorant do not perceive the soul departing from, or dwelling in, the body, enjoying the objects of sense, or endowed with the three attributes. Only those, who possess the eye of wisdom, know it in reality. Even striving Yogīs

are able to know the self dwelling in their heart. The ignorant, however, whose hearts have not been purified, perceive him not, even though striving."

In ordinary individuals we do not find even the knowledge of past events in an adequate measure. We are unable to recall to our mind many an event of recent occurrence. There is no wonder, then, that we should forget very old incidents. No one generally remembers the incidents of one's infancy, when he was only two or three years of age. We see that almost everyone of us experiences great pain at the time of birth and almost everyone cries on account of that pain; but no one has any recollection of those cries or of that pain. How, then, can anyone retain a memory of one's existence in the state of a foetus? Under these circumstances there cannot be a greater folly than regarding the existence of a prenatal life as dependent on our recollection of the incidents of that life. It is thus conclusively proved that the changes in our body in the shape of a boyhood, youth and old age, do not entail a change in the soul. Similarly, change of body does not involve a change in the soul. The soul is therefore immutable and that which is immutable is eternal. That which is eternal is real and that real substance is God. God constitutes the self of all, as the individual soul is His part and parcel (अंश):—

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

(Gītā X. 20)

"Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings; so I am the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings."

Thus, it is proved beyond doubt that God is changeless, unborn, imperishable, eternal and unquestionably true.

The Divine Law of Retribution is Full of Mercy

God is an illimitable, endless and unfathomable ocean of mercy. Whatever He does is fraught with mercy for His creatures. This, however, does not mean that He is unjust or that His mercy encourages His creatures to commit sins. The fact of the matter is that His laws are of a deterrent nature and the punishment or reward which is provided therein is full of mercy. The domestic laws framed by the head of a family and the national or political laws enacted by a ruler are also full of mercy; but that mercy is limited that may also have some selfish motive concealed behind it, or the head of a family or nation may, through an error of judgment, frame a law which may be prejudicial to the best interests of the family or nation or country. In their laws there is room for error, which may be due to personal likes and dislikes, egoism and limited knowledge. None of these can be predicated of God. That is why the divine code is free from error and ambiguity and full of wisdom and love. He who has grasped the real import of the divine laws through His grace, applies himself in right earnest of the task of regulating his life according to the same.

His soul is gradually flooded with Love of God (ईश्वरप्रेम), fearlessness (निर्भयता), tranquillity (शान्ति) and joy (आनन्द) and in the end he attains his goal by realizing God. Now, let us consider the nature of the divine laws. On careful consideration we find that the main object to be served by the divine code is—to ensure the all-round progress of all creatures and to secure them the highest good.

All his laws have been so framed as to enable the individual soul to attain this goal easily. He alone can, as a matter of fact, follow these laws easily who has unflinching faith in, and supreme love for, God. Once a man has

acquired unflinching faith in, and supreme love for, God, he naturally imbibes and develops good morals and other commendable virtues and his immoral tendencies and other vices are eradicated. The rules of conduct which have been described in the scriptures as constituting good morals should be regarded as commendable and the vices which have been enumerated as bad morals should be regarded as forbidden in the eyes of the divine law. In brief, the following are the items of good conduct:—

Harmlessness (अहिंसा), truthfulness (सत्य), austerity (तप), self-denial (त्याग), refraining from unlawful possession of others' property (अस्तेय), control of one's sexual appetite (ब्रह्मचर्य), non-acquisition of property (अपरिग्रह), sacrifice (यज्ञ), service (सेवा), carrying out the behests of holy men etc., compassion (दया), purity of body and mind (शौच), composure of the mind (शम), control of senses (दम), equanimity (समता), forgiveness (क्षमा), cheerfulness (प्रसन्नता), wisdom (ज्ञान), detachment from worldly objects (वैराग्य), and absence of pride (निरभिमानता) are some of the commendable virtues (सद्गुण).

Violence (हिंसा), untruth (असत्य), unlawful possession of others' property, illicit love, taking prohibited food (अभक्ष्यभक्षण) and intoxicating drugs or draught, indulging in idle or useless occupation (प्रमाद), speaking ill of others (निन्दा), gambling (द्यूत), using harsh or unpleasant language (कटु भाषण) etc., are some of the items of conduct constituting bad morals.

Lust (काम), anger (क्रोध), avarice (लोभ), indiscretion (अविवेक), pride (अभिमान), hypocrisy (दम्भ), jealousy (मत्सरता), sloth (आलस्य), fear (भय) and grief (शोक) constitute some of the vices. Good morals breed virtues and vice-versa. The two are interdependent.

To observe good morals and to practise virtues is to

abide by the divine laws, whereas to develop bad morals and to indulge in vices is to infringe those laws. One who abides by these laws merits reward, while he who violates them deserves punishment. Of course, the divine retribution, too, is full of mercy: we shall deal with this later. Here we have to emphasize the fact that the divine code is fraught with infinite mercy. Let us briefly discuss this point. By practising non-violence one becomes free from enmity (निर्वैर) and fearless; by practising truthfulness one attains God who is an embodiment of truth; by refraining from unlawful possession of others' property one earns the confidence of others; by controlling one's sexual appetite one gathers physical and moral stamina; by refusing to accumulate possessions one increases the stock of one's wisdom; by performing sacrifices and practising austerity one acquires mastery over one's senses and purifies one's inner self; by practising self-denial, doing service and carrying out the behests of holy men one eradicates one's weaknesses, imbibes and develops the different virtues such as composure of one's mind and control of one's senses and thereby realizes God.

The immense good that is done to one's self in this as well as the next world by the observance of the above rules of good conduct is one of the good features of the divine dispensation.

It is due to ignorance that one brings harm to one's own self as well as to others by having recourse to such evil practices as telling lies, resorting to underhand dealings (कपट), committing thefts and indulging in illicit love. Such evil practices, and vicious tendencies prove highly prejudicial to one's own self as well as to the world at large and destroys the peace and happiness of all. It is with a view to saving the world from this degradation that the Lord has

declared these practices as forbidden and deprecable. This prohibitive injunction is also full of mercy. For those who do not obey the prohibitive injunction through ignorance and commit the sin of disobeying the divine laws a merciful code has been framed. The punishment that is generally awarded to those who infringe the said laws is somewhat of the following type:—

Depriving the wrong-doer of such objects of enjoyment as are already available to him, stopping entirely or diminishing the influx of such objects in future or rendering him unfit for their enjoyment.

Now, let us consider how benevolent and merciful this dispensation is. How harmful the association of worldly enjoyments is, will be evident from a consideration of the following points:—

(a) Enjoyment of worldly pleasures spoils our habits.

(b) One who is given to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures cannot tread the path of God-realization and in the event of his stepping into it, there is fear of a downfall.

(c) Super-abundance of worldly enjoyments begets diseases, destroys bodily happiness and impairs the constitution.

(d) It awakens the evil and pollutes the mind.

(e) Sensual pleasures appear as enjoyable only through ignorance. As a matter of fact, they are unpleasant in the long run.

(f) Enjoyment of sensual pleasures exhausts our merits and multiplies our sins.

(g) Worldly pleasures cannot be enjoyed without some form of activity (आरम्भ) and there is no activity that does not involve infliction of pain on others (हिंसा) and the latter is harmful to the world at large and brings affliction to the agents themselves.

To deprive one of worldly enjoyments which are

miseres in disguise and to arrest or diminish their influx in future, is to avert in a way the present and future miseries. Just as to remove the lamp from before the eyes of a moth who is bent upon hugging its flame or to put it out or to put some hindrance in the way of the moth's approaching it constitutes an act of mercy, so does God commit an act of great mercy by depriving His creatures of worldly enjoyments by way of punishment for their misdeeds.

In some cases, instead of depriving the wrong-doer of his beloved objects such as a wife or a son in requital of his sins, He causes those dear and near ones to behave in such a way as to prove a source of annoyance to him. He is not only absolved from his sins by thus reaping their unpleasant consequences but the hostile, nay, sometimes defiant attitude of those people slackens the bond of attachment with them and creates a feeling of detachment, which in its turn withdraws the mind from all worldly attachments and in some cases leads the man on to the path of God-realization and thus enables him to attain abiding peace.

To some, God sends diseases and other calamities as a result of their sins. Afflicted by them, they make piteous appeals to God; nay, some of them in utter grief invoke His succour for ending their woe, like the famous elephant (गजेन्द्र) of the legend. By doing so, they are not only rid of their troubles, but also attain the love of God.

In some cases the Almighty deprives the wrong-doer of honour, dignity and good name and thereby does him really a lot of good. For honour, prestige and good name brings about the downfall of even some of the wisest persons. The ignorant hug these venomous notions as something very pleasant and attractive. The merciful God deprives them of

these for their good as an act of mercy. To deprive them of the pleasure of receiving honour and homage, is a great blessing in the guise of a curse. For they are great stumbling blocks in the path of God-realization.

In the case of others it is so ordained by God in requital of their sins that they find it difficult even to make the two ends meet. They live from hand to mouth and are ill-fed and ill-clad. They therefore, feel miserable and in their affliction cry out to God. Besides this, they shake of lethargy and pride, indolence and inertia, and resort to industry and labour which drive away their indolence, crush the false notion of dignity and banish their slothfulness and pride.

Thus, every act of divine retribution is full of infinite mercy. Just as by diving in a deep ocean abounding in pearls one can lay one's hands on most precious pearls; so by intellectually diving in the ocean of divine grace as manifested in the law of retribution one can lay one's hands on priceless gems beneficial alike in this as well as the next world. Thus it is proved that the divine law of retribution is full of mercy.

Every object in this world is either agreeable or disagreeable to a particular individual. We consider ourselves to be the recipients of divine favour when we acquire an object which is liked by us. We derive peace and happiness therefrom and begin to love that object. When we are confronted with some unpleasant situation or object, we out of ignorance, look upon it as a token of displeasure and are thereby thrown into the whirlpool of sorrow and misery and begin to entertain a dislike for that object or situation. But he who knows the real nature of the all-powerful, all-merciful, all-wise God, who is the greatest friend of us all, overcomes all sorrow

and infatuation and attains the highest peace and fearlessness. One is simply enraptured as soon as one is able to unravel the mystery of His laws. Every single law of God absolves the sinner from his sins and rids the afflicted of his affliction. He never helps one in multiplying one's sins. The sins of that person who has not been able to understand the divine nature and under the belief that God is merciful resorts to new sins on the strength of divine mercy, become so deep-rooted that it is not possible to expiate them even by such penitential acts as the repetition of certain incantations (जप), meditation (ध्यान), etc. They are exhausted only by reaping their fruit and not otherwise. Nay, they constitute a great hindrance in the way of his applying himself to meditation, adoration, etc.

Those who know the true nature of divine mercy and justice enjoy immense pleasure and peace when they are brought face to face with something not to their liking. Their feelings on that occasion are altogether different from the feelings of those ignorant persons who derive happiness and peace only from the acquisition of worldly enjoyments. They feel that:—

(1) It is dispensation of God who is just and merciful and who is the dearest of all.

(2) Contact with objects which are unpleasant or disagreeable in the eyes of the world, absolve them from past sins.

(3) By enduring diseases as an act of supreme austerity they are absolved from the accumulated sins of past lives and the mind becomes as pure and stainless as gold.

(4) One begins to exercise greater vigilance in obeying the divine injunction of refraining from forbidden and sinful deeds and is thus saved from future sins. By reaping the

fruit of past sins, he is absolved from those sins which had begun to fructify (प्रारब्ध); by enjoying their fruit as an act of penance, his mind is purified; he is saved from sins at the present moment and even absolved from the accumulated (संचित) sins of past lives and is also successful in guarding against future sins by refraining from forbidden acts. In this way he altogether freed from sins and becomes devotee of God. In adversity the faithful remember God more frequently than ever and there is no easier method of God-realization than the remembrance of God. A devotee said:—

सुखके माथे सिल पड़ो (जो) नाम हृदयसे जाय।

बलिहारी वा दुःख की (जो) पल-पल नाम रटाय॥

“Damn prosperity which puts God’s name out of mind. Blessed is the adversity which makes one repeat His name every moment.”

It behoves us all, therefore, to try to understand the hidden meaning of the divine law and mould our lives according to the same.

By obeying the laws framed by our parents, master or preceptor we can acquire only those limited objects which are within their power to confer; by obeying the laws of the all-merciful God, however, we can be freed from all sins and attain the summum bonum of human existence.

Love of God Includes Universal Love

God is infinite and illimitable. The whole universe consisting of mobile and immobile creatures is contained in a fragment (अंश) of God and rests on His *Saṅkalpa* alone. He evolves and dissolves the universe by dint of His enrapturing power (योगमाया). The universe comes into being with the idea of God and is dissolved or disappears as soon as He abandons the idea. Just as a dreaming person creates a world of his own within himself on the

basis of his own imagination or idea, so does God create the universe while abiding in His own self. The only difference between the two is that while the dreamer is in state of ignorance and has to depend on others, God is knowledge itself and is independent in everyway. Hence this universe is manifested in a fragment of God in the same way as tiny star twinkles in the limitless expanse of the sky. The analogy of the sky has been taken simply to make the point clear, as a matter of fact, the infinitude of the sky is comparatively small, limited as it is by time and space. The infinitude of God, on the other hand, is altogether unlimited, as He is beyond the conception of time and space. The infinitude of the sky is contained in a fragment of His Idea in the same way as the world of dream subsists in a fragment of the dreamer's imagination. The infinitude of God cannot be illustrated by any worldly object, because there is nothing analogous to God in this world. To adopt another popular analogy all the countless millions of solar systems are contained in a single hair on the body of God, although, as a matter of fact, the God of which we are speaking here, is devoid of limbs (निस्त्वयव) and hence He cannot be said to be endowed with hair. But there is no alternative but to fall back upon these worldly illustrations for satisfying the human intellect which is as worldly as anything else. Thus, whatever divine principle is elucidated with the help of some worldly illustration is only partially explained. Really speaking, it is not possible to explain it even partially. We have, therefore, to console ourselves with the apology that it is extremely difficult to grasp and explain the divine principle which is a matter of experience only, as it is very profound and mysterious and can be comprehended only through the Divine Grace. The Lord has said in the Bhagavadgītā :—

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन-
माश्चर्यवद्ब्रूयति तथैव चान्यः ।

(II. 29)

“Hardly anyone perceives this soul as marvellous, scarce another likewise speaks thereof as marvellous.”

Thus, when even those noble souls who have realized the divine truth find it difficult to explain it to others, it is out of question for others to do it with any amount of success. To explain a thing is the function of speech, which is at a loss to describe the nature of God to the same extent as it is grasped by the intellect and, as a matter of fact, the divine nature cannot be fully comprehended even by the intellect. In spite of all this an insight into this reality has been facilitated by utterances of holy men. But owing to deficiency of faith, love, concentration, acuteness of intellect and purity of mind, a large majority of the listeners are unable to grasp the truth. That is why this subject is so difficult to grasp and explain. But this much should be borne in mind that Primordial Matter or Māyā subsists in a fragment of that infinite divinity who is knowledge and bliss combined and the whole of this phenomenal world, consisting of animate and inanimate creation, subsists in a fragment of that Māyā. Under such circumstances the love which has God for its object automatically embraces the whole universe. For God is the mainstay of whole universe. He is its very soul, nay, He pervades everything and is the sole cause (material as well as efficient) of the universe. He is the whole of which the entire universe is a part, a component part. The Lord Himself spoke to Arjuna thus:—

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥

(Gītā X. 42)

“Or, what will you gain by knowing all this in detail,

Arjuna? Suffice it to say that I stand holding this entire universe by a spark of My Yogic power.”

One who has grasped the meaning of the above assertion is convinced that the entire universe subsists in a fragment of the Lord, and that it is the Lord who is manifested in the form of the universe. Under such circumstances a lover of God naturally begins to love the universe as well. One who has comprehended the reality of gold undoubtedly begins to love gold ornaments: he can never ignore them. This requires no proof. And if he does so, he has surely not understood the nature of gold. Similarly, one who has understood the divine nature and loves God can never ignore His creatures.

A person who devoutly and lovingly adores all the limbs of one whom he reveres, can never burn a part of any particular limb or lop off any other limb, however small it may be. For him every limb of the revered person is adorable and lovable. In the same way is it possible for one who knows the reality of God and loves Him, to bear a grudge towards any creature whatsoever, which is like a fragment or limb of his beloved God, or to harm it or inflict pain on it? No, never. Therefore he who loves God is naturally a lover of the whole universe. Just as a man who, though lovingly worshipping all the limbs of the object of his veneration, burns a particular limb is neither a devotee, nor a lover, nor a true worshipper, in the same way a lover of God who does the least harm to any creature or inflicts pain on it, is neither a devotee, nor a lover, nor a true worshipper of God. As a matter of fact, he has not understood the real nature of God.

One who knows the real nature of God, is surely a lover of the universe; but this should not be taken to mean that love of God and universal love are co-extensive terms. For

the divine reality extends even beyond the universe and is infinite and endless. Of course, inasmuch as the universe is contained in fragment of God, universal love is also included in love of God. As a matter of fact, love of God embraces the whole of His being, including the universe.

The nature (प्रकृति) of God is twofold, the material and the spiritual. The Lord has termed them in the Bhagavadgītā as the lower (अपरा) and the higher (परा) nature. The former consists of ether (आकाश), air (वायु), light (तेज), water (जल), earth (पृथिवी), mind (मनस्), intellect (बुद्धि) and egoism (अहंकार). The universe consisting of the twenty-four elements has evolved out of this lower nature. The individual soul (जीवात्मा) or Spirit, as it is called, constitutes the higher nature and sustains the other nature. The embodied soul (life) is also of two kinds, the moving (चर) and the motionless (अचर). Human beings, animals, birds, etc., are included in the first category, and trees, plants, creepers, etc., in the second. The whole creation, consisting of the two aforesaid natures, is what we call the universe. Even he who loves the world with some ulterior motive, loves God, although his love is of an inferior type. The love which has some ulterior motive behind it, ceases as soon as the motive is realized: It is called inferior because it is limited by time and space and because its result is also inferior. The broad, exclusive love of God, includes only that love of the universe which is preceded by a knowledge of the divine nature and embraces the whole of the universe, including animate and inanimate beings, and is of a disinterested nature. Although even this type of love is limited by time and space, it is accompanied by a knowledge of reality and free from desire and hence is regarded as true and commendable. The real and highest love of God is that which embraces the infinite divinity unlimited by time and space and including the animate and

inanimate creation and is divorced from any ulterior motive.

Now let us consider what sort of love we should have for the animate and inanimate creation, the higher and lower natures of God.

Love for Sentient Creatures Consists in:—

(1) Rendering motiveless help, bodily, mental as well as monetary, according to one's capacity, to those creatures (human beings) who are eligible for salvation in achieving real progress in this as well as the next world and attaining the highest Bliss.

(2) Rendering disinterested help, bodily, mental and monetary, according to one's capacity, to animals, birds and other creatures who are, as a rule, debarred from attaining knowledge of the Self, with a view to preserving and nourishing them and promoting their welfare.

(3) Looking after trees, plants, creepers, etc., in a disinterested way.

Love for Insentient Creation Consists in :—

(1) Striving for the advancement, growth and protection of those objects which are useful to living beings and helpful in the development of noble qualities and healthy activities and making right use of them without attachment and desire simply with a view to guiding the masses, and—

(2) Striving for the diminution and destruction of those objects which are harmful to living creatures and promote vices and immoral activities and giving them up without hatred and desire, merely with a view to guiding the public.

Just as to multiply, preserve and partake of useful objects, is, to love them similarly, to destroy and shun

harmful objects, is also to love them. The interests of the latter are served by their being wiped out of existence and love consists in promoting one's interests.

In the same way, to draw away the mind, intellect, egoism as well as all the senses from immoral conduct, vices and worldly enjoyments and to incline them towards devotion and engage them in pursuits connected with God, with a view to promoting virtues is to love them.

An aspirant (साधक) should love all these with a view to realizing God, while those who have attained perfection should do so with a view to guiding the public.

Thus love of the universe is included in love of God. The former accompanies the latter as a matter of course. Therefore every human being should make a life-long exertion for developing pure and exclusive love for God. The following are some of the methods of attaining love of God:—

(1) To listen to, ponder over and read and recite the sweet, honey-like anecdotes illustrating the qualities, loving nature, greatness and the real nature of God.

(2) To associate with those persons who have faith in God and love Him without any earthly gain.

(3) To repeat and recite loudly God's epithets with love, fixing one's mind at the same time upon His divine nature.

(4) To obey the divine laws and to remain cheerful under every circumstance, whether favourable or adverse, taking it as a divine dispensation.

(5) To strive for the good of all creatures, knowing them to be His fragment.

(6) To be eager to grasp His true nature and to get His vision.

(7) To pray to God in seclusion, in piteous tone.

By following these methods one can develop pure and

exclusive love for God and realize Him directly. He cannot but cherish disinterested love for the universe consisting of the animate and inanimate creation. The Lord has characterized loving devotees who know the divine nature as follows:—

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
 निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥
 संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
 मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

(Gītā XII. 13-14)

“He who is free from malice towards all beings, who is friendly as well as compassionate, who has no feeling of meum and is free from egoism, to whom pleasure and pain are alike and who is forgiving by nature, who is ever content and mentally united to Me, who has subdued his body, mind and senses and has a firm resolve, who has surrendered his mind and intellect to Me—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.”

The above exposition establishes beyond doubt that philanthropy (universal love) consists in the love of God.



Is God Open to Perception?

A number of friends have expressed a doubt whether even in this Kali Age it is possible to see God with our own eyes and chat with Him in the same way as two chummies meet and enjoy a hearty talk. If it is possible, they would like to know the method by which they could obtain a vision of that enchanting figure at the earliest moment. They would further like to know whether there was anyone present in this world who had been blessed with a vision of the Lord.

In fact, only those blessed beings can answer these questions to whom the Lord has revealed His enrapturing form.

Though not properly qualified to deal with the subject, I venture to submit the following observations in regard to these questions just by way of amusement, prompted by the good grace of the Lord and His beloved devotees.

(1) Just as ample evidence is forthcoming to show that Dhruva, Prahlāda and others in the Satyayuga (Golden Age) and the succeeding age were blessed with a vision of the Lord, similarly, the fact that Sūradāsa and Tulasīdāsa and a number of other devotees belonging to the Kali Age were similarly blessed, is corroborated by history. Nay, in works like Viṣṇupurāṇa visualization of the Deity has been declared as easier in the Kali Age than in the preceding ages. The Bhāgavata also says:—

कृते यद् ध्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्धरिकीर्तनात्॥

(XII. iii. 12)

“ The results which are achieved in Satyayuga by meditation on God, in Tretāyuga by performing sacrifices

and in Dwāpara by worshipping the Deity, are achieved in the Kali Age by simply reciting His Name”.

Just as fire was used to be kindled for sacrificial purpose in ancient India by rubbing two logs of wood against each other, even so God is manifested as a result of friction caused by the loving invocation of a prayerful heart, i.e., by loud repetition of the Divine names with love. The sage Patañjali, too, says in his “Aphorisms on Yoga”:—

स्वाध्यायादिष्टदेवतासंप्रयोगः ।

“Repetition on the names of one’s beloved Deity induces Him to appear in person.”

Just as a Yogī who has completely mastered his will is able to visualize whatever he likes to have before his eyes, even so when one who is truly and exclusively devoted to God, wishes to behold Him, absorbed in His Love, the Lord manifests Himself then and there in whatever form the devotee likes to see Him. The Lord says in the Bhagavadgītā:—

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥

(XI. 54)

“Through single-minded devotion, however, I can be seen in this Form (with four arms), and known in essence and even entered into, O valiant Arjuna!”

If a loving friend is seized with an intense longing to see his beloved and if the latter is apprised of this, he cannot help seeing the former. How, then, can God Himself who is the very embodiment of love, whose deep insight into the mysteries of love is unparalleled, stay without meeting His loving devotees?

Thus it is proved beyond doubt that the Lord, who is love personified appears before His devotees in all times and in all climes.

(2) Of the various means of visualizing God the most efficacious one is ‘true love’.

True love of God is generated, gradually through association with saints and holy men, remembrance of God, purity of heart, dispassion, indifference to the world, intense longing to see God and pining for Him.

It is a matter for regret that many of us have no faith in the existence of God. There are others who, though believing in God, do not appreciate the greatness and value of seeing the most beloved Lord, being engrossed in false pleasures derived from transient and ephemeral objects of enjoyment. If anyone is able to know something of His greatness by hearing of it and reposing faith in Him, he rests contented with inadequate efforts to realize Him or gives way to despondency after exerting himself a little. He does not strive even as much as one strives for earning money.

Some people say that they exerted themselves not a little but could not obtain a vision of the Lord. We would ask them whether they ever strove to escape from the clutches of birth and death even as much as they would for averting a sentence of death, whether they ever tried to meet the Lord with the same eagerness as they would approach a lady-love of whom they are enamoured. If not, their assertion that the Lord does not appear in person is altogether meaningless.

The Lord Himself gets absorbed in contemplation of his devotee who is completely merged in His meditation just as He did in the case of Bhīṣma, who was merged in His thought while lying on his bed of arrows. The Lord says in the Bhagavadgītā:—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।

(IV. II)

“Arjuna, howsoever men approach Me, even so do I see them.”

When by constantly repeating the name of the Lord one begins to experience a thrilling sensation every moment, he is

absolved from all his sins and then he loses interest in everything else than God. Being afflicted by pangs of separation he begins to shed tears in a ceaseless stream from his eyes, kicks the wealth of all the three worlds and runs mad after the Lord like the blessed cow-maids of Vṛndāvana; and the moment he begins to pine in love for the Lord like fish taken out of water, the blissful Lord manifests Himself in His divine enrapturing form. This is the right way of obtaining a vision of the Lord.

Anyone who has a genuine desire to see the Lord, should make a loud piteous wail for obtaining a vision of the Lord like Rukmiṇī, Sītā and the cow-maids of Vṛndāvana.

(3) Although such people are not publicly known in this Kali age as may have obtained a vision of the Lord in this way, it cannot be believed that they are altogether absent. For only one among thousands becomes known in the world like Prahlāda and others, for some special reason, otherwise such people have no interest in giving publicity to their revelations.

If it be urged that it is advisable to make such facts widely known for the good of the world at large, our reply is that it is difficult to get people with a credulous mind to listen to such experience. And it is difficult for anyone else than a competent soul to repose faith in these things. If one makes such things public without discrimination, they will cease to have any value and no one will believe them.

Hence we should believe that such people are doubtless present in the world as have obtained a vision of the Lord in the aforesaid way. It is our lack of faith which is responsible for our not being able to meet them and it is equally profitable for all to believe it rather than not to believe it; for it is faith which is ultimately responsible for generating true love for God, and for enabling one to see the Lord as one goes and meets one's own friend.

Methods of God-perception

True love is the best means of obtaining a vision of the blissful Lord. Now the question is, how this type of love is to be cultivated and what kind of love makes it possible for the Lord to manifest Himself in visible form and bless the devotee with His divine presence.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who meditates on His mental image with an unfluctuating mind undaunted by obstacles, as Dhruva did in the past.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who is prepared to suffer all sorts of persecutions and cheerfully offer his head to the sharp edge of the sword for the sake of the Divine name, like Prahlāda.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by renouncing wealth and woman and proceeding to the forest for the sake of the Lord as Lakṣmaṇa did.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by roaming about like the sage Sūtikṣṇa of the Rāmacaritamānasa, mad in love of God.

The immortal Tulasīdāsa graphically describes how the youthful sage is driven into raptures at the news of the advent of Śrī Rāma. Lord Śiva, who is narrating the story of His Divine Consort, Pārvatī, relates how the sage goes into raptures over the prospect of beholding the divine countenance of Śrī Rāmacandra, the very sight of which liberates the soul from its coils of birth and death. The sage knows not in what direction he is moving and what road he has taken. Nay, he has forgotten his own self and has no idea where he is going. Now he turns back and proceeds in the opposite direction and now he resumes the same direction. Sometimes he begins to dance and sing praises to the Lord,

his attachment and devotion to Him is so deep and solid. The Lord conceals Himself behind a tree and witnesses this rare spectacle. He cannot contain Himself for a long time, the intense love of the devotee compels Him to appear before his inward eye. The sage gets absorbed in meditation and sits motionless on the roadway like a statue. His whole frame is thrilled with joy and appears like a jackfruit on account of its bristling hair. The Lord of Raghus now draws near and is delighted to find His devotee in that ecstatic condition. The Lord, who is naturally disposed to relieve the distress and want of His devotees, accosts the sage in loving accents and asks him to get up.

One can meet the Lord face to face by devoutly and lovingly surrendering himself to Him like Śrī Hanumān.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by going mad in Love for the Lord and yearning for His sight like Prince Bharata.

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa has in his own masterly way portrayed the ecstatic condition of Bharata, who may be called the very incarnation of love, at the expiry of the period of Śrī Rāma's exile (which extended to fourteen years).

Bharata was seized with dismay when he came to realize that the period of Śrī Rāma's exile was going to expire only a day after whereas the Lord had not turned up till then, which he could not account for. He therefore wondered whether the Lord had forgotten him on account of his crooked nature. He envied the lot of his younger brother, Lakṣmaṇa who had focussed his love on the lotus-feet of Śrī Rāma. The Lord had surely discovered his deceitful and crooked nature, thought he: that was why He did not take him along with Him. It was no doubt true, he admitted, that, if the Lord took notice of his conduct and

paid him his deserts, there could be no hope of His redemption even in millions of Kalpas or revolutions of creation and destruction of the world. The Lord, however, never took notice of the faults of His servants, a befriender of the poor and extremely tender-hearted that He was. He was therefore perfectly sure that the Lord would certainly meet him and the omens also confirmed his belief. If, however, he survived even after the expiry of the period of exile, there could be no greater sinner than he in this world. In this way Bharata was going to succumb to the anguish of separation from Śrī Rāma, when Śrī Hanumān, the monkey-god, made his appearance on the scene in the disguise of a Brāhmaṇa, just like a ship that comes to rescue a drowning man. Śrī Hanumān found him sitting on a mattress of straw with a tuft of matted hair on his head and the name of the Lord of Raghus on his lips and with tears streaming forth from his lotus-like eyes and bathing his emaciated frame.

The following is the description of the meeting of Śrī Rāma with Bharata after the latter's conversation with Śrī Hanumān.

Tears gushed forth from the lotus-like eyes of Śrī Rāma and His whole frame bristled with joy; the Lord of the three worlds hugged His loving brother to His bosom with great affection. It looked as if grace and love had appeared in human form and locked each other in loving embrace. The merciful Lord enquires after the welfare of Bharata and finds Himself tongue-tied. The joy that flowed from this meeting, is beyond the ken of speech and mind and can be known only by those who experience it. Bharata replied that he was quite happy, now that the Lord of Ayodhyā had blessed him with His sight and taking compassion on his wretched plight, helped him by His own hands out of the

unfathomable ocean of separation in which he was just going to be submerged.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who, having relinquished the sense of honour and dignity, rolls on the dust containing the impressions of the lotus-feet of Śrī Hari, like Śrī Akrūra of the Bhāgavata. Of him it is said in Śrīmad Bhāgavata:—

“He noticed in the cow-pen the footprints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the dust of whose feet is kissed by the diadems of all the guardian deities of the different worlds constituting the universe—footprints which adorned the face of the earth and could be easily recognized by the marks of lotus, barley, goad, etc., borne on the same. He was overwhelmed with joy at the sight of these footprints: a thrill ran through his whole body and his eyes were blinded with tears. He alighted from the chariot and, recognizing that the ground he was treading bore the footprints of the Lord, he began to roll thereon in ecstasy of joy.”

“The fulfilment of earthly existence lies in looking on and hearing about the footprints and other symbols of the Lord under the advice of one’s preceptor, just as Akrūra did.” (X. xxxviii. 25—27)

The Lord can be perceived by getting mad in love for Him like Uddhava who shook off his pride of wisdom or enlightenment on seeing the love of the cow-maids of Vṛndāvana.

The Lord can appear before us if we cry for Him from the bottom of our heart like Rukmiṇī to whom every moment that passed without Him was like the day of final destruction.

The Lord can appear before a loving devotee who does not hesitate even to saw the head of his own son, when the occasion demands it, like the celebrated king Mayūradhwaja,

who had taken a vow to carry out the behests of sages and seers, whatever cost he might have to pay for the same.

The Lord can appear before one who like the great Bhakta Narasī Mehatā shakes off all sense of decorum, honour, fame and fear and roams about singing praises to the Lord in ecstasy of love.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by passing the necessary tests in the nine forms or stages of Bhakti just as we pass university examinations.

The Lord not only appears in visible form but can partake of the food offered to Him with love just as He did in the case of Draupadī, Gajarāja, the celebrated leader of the herd of elephants, Śabarī, Vidūra and others.

The Lord says in Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā:—

“Whosoever offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of purified intellect, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love” (X. 26).

Hence it behoves everyone of us to pine for the sight of the Lord with supreme love and intense yearning.



Some Methods of God-realization

Self-sacrifice is the prime requisite in all spheres of activity. Through self-sacrifice the meanest of creatures may attain blessedness by pursuing any form of activity sanctioned by the scriptures. Of worldly enjoyments one should partake of only as much as is barely necessary for the maintenance of the body. If that is not possible, the blessed state may be attained even by shaking off attachment for enjoyments.

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Whatever you do, do it in a strictly impersonal way. Let not the sense of 'I' overtake you when you perform any laudable action.

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Beatitude may be attained even by worshipping an image of God at one's home with true Devotion and singing praises of the Lord.

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Retire regularly to lonely and secluded place everyday and try to banish all thoughts of the world from the mind for the time being. When the world is thus forgotten even for the time being, the conscious Self, or the Ātmā alone will remain. Meditate on this Self. Such meditation will bring Samādhi (absorption), and Samādhi will bring emancipation.

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Take a vow to perform in a disinterested spirit only such actions with your body as are conducive to the welfare of others. There is no duty more sacred than this. Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra says in the Rāmacaritamānasa:—

“O brother, there is no duty so sacred as doing good to

others; and there is nothing so ignoble as oppressing others.”¹

By observing this rule alone, one may obtain emancipation from the trammels of worldly existence.

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If the mind and the senses are under control, meditation on God, is the best method of attaining blessedness. If, however, the mind and the senses are not under control, one should take recourse to practices such as fasting and other religious observances, not with any ulterior motive, but only for the benefit of the soul. We should seek nothing else from God than His own Realization. God may be realized through such disinterested practices. In short, practice of Yoga should be resorted to when the mind and the senses are under control. Or else fasting and other austerities should be practised without any worldly motive, and merely for God-realization. But the easiest of all these methods is the practice of Devotion (Bhakti).

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The Divine Name should be repeated at all times, and in all conditions. It should never be allowed to slip out of the mind. This is the easiest method of God-realization. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa says in his Rāmacaritamānasa:—

“It is through remembrance of the sacred Name that the child of wind-god (Hanumān) has made Śrī Rāma (God) subservient to his will, the ill-famed Ajāmila, the Lord of elephants and the harlot of puranic fame attained salvation through the power of the Name.”²

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There is one more discipline the pursuit of which gives us joy at every moment and which, moreover, does not

1. पर हित सरिस धरम नहिं भाई। पर पीड़ा सम नहिं अधमाई॥

2. सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नामू। अपने बस करि राखे रामू॥
अपतु अजामिलु गजु गनिकाऊ। भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ॥

involve any exertion on our part. This practice is known as the practice of seeing joy everywhere—‘आनन्दमयोऽभ्यासात्’, joy (Bliss) is an integral part of God. There is joy all around, joy inside and joy outside; the whole creation is full of joy and joy alone. If you do not actually realize this go on repeating this through speech and recognize this fact with your mind. Just as a swimmer floats on water and dives into it, even so float in the river of joy and take a plunge into it. Remain absorbed in joy day and night. Even if death occurs of any of your relations, or your house catches fire, or something equally untoward happens, there should be joy and joy alone; whatever may happen, this joy should never be disturbed. Through this practice all sorrow and suffering is easily got rid of. Let the speech indulge in talks of joy, let the mind dwell on joy and joy alone, let the intellect analyse joy and nothing else; but if you do not actually experience joy, try to feel it by sheer force of imagination. Even imaginary joy produces very good results; for it leads ultimately to God-realization. This practice is open to every individual. It is stated that in the medieval times, when Mohammedan kings ruled over India, the Hindus were asked merely to get themselves enrolled as Mohammedans and declare themselves as such without renouncing their faith or embracing Islam and without giving up Hindu practices and observances, adding that they were to lose nothing thereby. The Hindus played into this trick and accepted the thin end of the wedge. After a generation, Kazi taught the children of these nominal converts that they were true Muslims and asked them to adopt the practices of the Islamic faith. The result was that in course of time the descendants of those so-called Muslims became bigoted Musalamans. Similarly, we should all firmly believe that we are all joy (Bliss) and nothing else. When this is

firmly impressed on our mind, we shall have joy and joy alone.)

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Place an image or picture of the Lord in front of you, and keeping the eyes open fix them on the eyes of the image or the picture. Meditate on the form of the Lord in this way and while doing so firmly believe that God will reveal Himself through the image or the picture. Such meditation practised with full faith may lead to God-realization. This is also an easy method of God-realization.

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Whatever objects of the world you see, tree or stone, man, beast or bird, persuade yourself to believe that God Himself has assumed all these forms. Then ask the mind to go wherever it pleases, all the forms of the world being nothing but representations of God Himself. All that you see is a manifestation of Nārāyaṇa, the Paramātmā (Oversoul). Mentally bow to every object of the world that comes before your eyes, believing that God Himself has appeared before you in that form. This practice of seeing infinite forms of the world as only so many manifestations of the same God, may also lead to God-realization. Thousands of such methods have been suggested in the scriptures, out of which the Sādhaka has to select and adopt that which appears easy to him. The adoption and practice of anyone of these methods may lead to final beatitude. Knowing that all that exists is God, one will begin to look upon everything with an equal eye. This one simple practice, if diligently pursued, may bring him salvation.

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Mental dispositions are of two kinds, which are represented by likes and dislikes. That which is agreeable to the mind is liked by the mind, and that which is repellent to

it is disliked by it. Anything which is agreeable to the mind will naturally bring delight to it and that which is unpalatable to it will bring sorrow. Now treat this sorrow, when it comes, as a boon from God and thus divest it of its disagreeable character. Try to persuade yourself that whatever happens is prompted by the will of God. Not a leaf can stir without the will of God. We on our part rejoice in favourable circumstances and shun what appears unfavourable to us. How can we realize God when such is the condition of our mind? We should learn to rejoice in whatever may please God. Of course, there can be no difficulty in adopting this attitude in favourable circumstances; nay, we should try to view unpropitious events as propitious. It should be remembered that such events cannot be unwelcome to God, for in that case they could not have happened. This one single practice will suffice to bring us within easy reach of salvation. We shall then have joy and nothing but joy forever.

If the above Sādhana appears difficult to practice, one should practise observance of Truth. Let him be truthful in speech, truthful in his dealings, and truthful in his conduct. This also will lead to salvation. A Hindi poet says:—

“There is no penance equal to truth, no sin equal to lying; he whose heart is truthful, carries God within his heart.”*

The Practice of Truth, though difficult, is bound to lead to God-realization.

All the objects of this world in their visible form are really evanescent in character. Their real character is visible to our eyes. Look upon all these objects with an equal eye. Make no differentiation among them. Do not discriminate between one object and another. If you cannot recognize the world as a manifestation of God, at least remove the

* साँच बराबर तप नहीं, झूठ बराबर पाप।
जाके हिरदै साँच है, ताके हिरदै आप ॥

sense of discrimination therefrom. Just as you treat the body as your own and do not view it apart from your self, nor do you discriminate between one part and another, even so do not discriminate between one individual and another. View all with an equal eye, remove all sense of difference among them. Beatitude may be attained even through the removal of this sense of difference. If you cannot remember God, try to pursue this discipline.

If this too is not possible, treat every sound that you hear, such as the sound of the fall of the Ganges or of the blowing of winds or the sound of ordinary birds and beasts as a verbal manifestation of God. This, too, is an easy method of attaining blessedness. Whatever sound you hear, know it to be a manifestation of God Himself—'नादो ब्रह्म' (Sound is God). In fact, whatever we hear is God. If you hear someone abusing you or blessing you, know both these kinds of sound to be God. But if we are pained to hear abusive language used in respect of us, we cannot be said to have recognized sound as God. The moment we come to recognize sound as God, we shall have nothing but joy all around us. Try to experience the same amount of joy in hearing abusive language as one may derive from a sight of God. We should not mind whether we are abused or praised. This one practice alone may lead to salvation.

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If that, too, is not possible, try to meditate on God. Retire to a secluded place and sit erect closing your eyes. Try to perceive God wherever the mind goes and in whatever it sees. Look upon the mind as your best friend and persuade yourself that it will surely help you to attain blessedness. Impress the idea firmly on your mind that it cannot think of anything else than God. If the mind thinks of a watch, or of a pot, recognize it to be nothing else than God. Let the idea of God be tacked

on to those images. Be convinced that whatever the mind thinks of, is God, that is precisely what enters your mind. If you find that the mind thinks of nothing, then know God to be precisely that which thinks of nothing. Even if the mind thinks of wife, children or wealth, etc., do not look at those objects as wife, children or wealth, but treat them as God Himself. Treat even a stone or a tree that enters your mind as God. Know God to be just what He appears to you like. This is another straight path to attain blessedness. Each of the methods suggested above is helpful in attaining blessedness. Of course, it is true that one practice may take more time than another. But all of them are equally conducive to spiritual good.

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The world seen in a dream vanishes as soon as you wake up and open your eyes. Even so, persuade yourself that you are passing through a state of dream, that whatever is revealed to your senses is nothing but the creation of a dream. As soon as the dream is over, the reality will automatically flash upon you. Believe that all that appears is unreal, made of the stuff of which dreams are made. What meets the eye has no existence in reality. The dream is bound to terminate. As soon as the eyes are opened, it will come to an end. Here it may be asked, how is it that the eyes have not opened till today? Our answer is that you had never so far recognized the world to be a dream. The determination of the soul (Ātmā) is unshakable. Therefore, impress it firmly on your mind that the world is a dream. Even if it appears to you as real, continue to believe that it is a dream. Whatever its appearance, do not cease to recognize it as a dream. If you continue to believe like this, the dream will be broken one day and the Truth will be realized by you.

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If you cannot remember this truth every moment, what is it that you remember most? Is it wife, children, wealth and other beloved things that are uppermost in your thoughts? Try to find out what is it that you love most among these objects. You will perhaps say that Prāṇa (life-breath) is the most beloved of all, there is nothing dearer than life. If so, believe that life (breath) is Brahma (God). You will certainly remember what is dearest to you. Breath is life. Recognize the five types of breath to be Brahma and the sound emanating from these breaths to be the name of Brahma. Keep watch over the ingoing and outgoing breath. Your salvation is assured through this practice alone. The inhalation and exhalation will continue till the very last moment. If this practice is continued till the last moment, you will surely attain salvation in the end. Thus, salvation will be easy to attain even by recognizing life-breath as Brahma and the sound emanating therefrom as the name of Brahma. The outgoing and ingoing breath produces the sound 'So'ham,' which means 'That (God) I am.' This is also a name of the Paramātmā. Thus God may be realized even by recognizing breath to be Brahma. The Sādhaka should adopt whatever method appears to him easy and suits his taste.

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Of all effulgences, that possessed by God is the brightest. Nay, God Himself is Supreme Effulgence. Of all effulgent objects open to our view, the Sun possesses the greatest effulgence. Therefore, worship the Sun as an embodiment of Divine Effulgence. If it is urged that the Sun cannot be observed at all times, another alternative is to recognize the sky, which is always visible, as God. Supplement this belief with the idea that the Knower of the soul within the body is a conscious substance and is all-pervading like the sky and possessor of Knowledge. This conception itself

will bring salvation to you. If you cannot hold fast this supplementary conception; it does not matter; simply recognize the sky to be God. God Himself will take care of the rest. He will supply the necessary understanding through which you will begin to feel that God is all-pervading like the sky. When God will manifest Himself through it, the sky itself will begin to throb with Life and Consciousness. With this idea meditate on the sky as the unembodied Form of God.

Besides those described above, there are numerous other ways of attaining blessedness, but something must be done by way of practice. It is futile to think of beatitude without some form of practice, without some exertion. These practices have been pointed out in the Gītā, the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. There is scriptural authority for each of them. Aspirants should adopt any of them according to their individual taste and convenience. Such a practice, if pursued with any selfish motive, will lead to the fulfilment of our selfish ends. It will not lead to God-realization. It will provide the Sādhaka with worldly comforts. If he is so inclined, let the Sādhaka utilize these practices for securing worldly comforts and amenities of life; but if he is anxious to secure true happiness, then let him give up all thought of worldly interests and carefully pursue the practices of image-worship, muttering the Divine name and visualizing joy everywhere. These practices are the best and easiest of all.



God and His Creation

A friend has asked the following question:—

Question. It appears from the Vedas, the Purāṇas and other sacred books of Hinduism and other Indian faiths that the Jīvātmā (individual soul) migrates from one body to another according to his Karma (good or bad actions). If this is a fact, what was the Karma that attached itself to the Ātmā (soul) when the world was originally created and the pure, immaculate, actionless soul entered the different bodies moulded by Prakṛti (Nature)? If the transmigration of the soul is a natural process, where lies the necessity for Devotion?

Answer. According to the Guṇas (qualities) and the Karmas (actions) the Jīvātmā goes about taking birth in the eighty-four lakhs of species of living beings. These species—consisting of human beings, animals, birds and insects—evolved by Prakṛti are manifested at the beginning of creation, and at the end of creation are dissolved into Prakṛti, much in the same way as the different varieties of gold ornaments, when dissolved, are reduced into gold again. Prakṛti as the prime cause is without beginning. And what is known as the Jīvātmā or individual consciousness has been related with Prakṛti from time without beginning. This relation, though coming down from time without beginning, can yet be broken through effort. This breaking of relation is called Mukti (salvation), and it is for the attainment of this salvation that the different paths of Bhakti, Karma and Jñāna (Devotion, Action and Knowledge) have been recommended by the Śāstras (scriptures).

The transmigration of the soul is not so natural as to preclude all possibility of stopping the process. When the

transmigration of the soul, it may be argued, is inherent in its character and has gone on forever, it must continue for all time to come; for that which has existed from time without beginning must persist forever. This, however, is not correct; for the transmigration of the soul is due to ignorance, and ignorance or error is a thing which, though existing from time without beginning, disappears the moment true knowledge makes its appearance. This truth is universally applicable. When a man gains knowledge of a new subject, his previous ignorance of the subject disappears; that ignorance, however, was beginningless, that is to say, we cannot assign a fixed point of time when it began. Now when objective ignorance is destroyed by objective knowledge, where lies the wonder if the beginningless Nescience is destroyed with the dawn of true spiritual Knowledge? On the contrary, there is this particular point in favour of such knowledge, viz., that the Paramātmā Himself being eternal knowledge, which is part of His being, must necessarily be eternal. For the attainment of this knowledge practice of Devotion and other forms of spiritual discipline must be resorted to.

Question. When this universe came into existence for the first time and men, women, birds and trees were shaped into their present moulds, how did this happen? Did the whole thing come into being of its own accord through mutual combination of the elements? If so, the Prakṛti, the elements, and the Ātmā are still there, and yet no new form comes into being of its own accord through their mutual combination. If it is held that the stainless Paramātmā the embodiment of Knowledge, adopted a gross body and moulded the various forms into their present shapes with His own hands, how is it that the saints have declared the Paramātmā to be formless? Again, it is not possible to create a physical body without the union of the male and the female. And if by any means such

a body may be created without such union that imperfect individual will lack the all pervasive quality of the soul.

Answer. A universe created by Prakṛti which has a beginning in time cannot be accepted as a postulate. If this is done, that is, if a beginning of the world is posited, it will come to mean that before a particular point of time the universe did not exist; but the fact is not so. On the contrary, it is held that the world as a never-ending process of creation and destruction has existed from time without beginning. If it is held that there must be some point of time, however distant, when this world was created, the pronouncement of the Śāstras that the universe has existed from time without beginning will be falsified. Letting alone the view of the Śāstras, this point of view cannot be established even by logic. Had there been the one pure spirit in the beginning without any seed of creation, what could be the occasion and ground for this creation to have come into being and in what manner should it have come into being? Of course, it is true that God, who is all-powerful, can do things which are ordinarily impossible. But without any predisposing cause, without the impulse of the Karma of Jīvas, why should He create this universe with so many diversities of position and status? And if we believe that He did so without any rhyme or reason, we thereby expose Him to the charge of partiality and cruelty, neither of which can be attributed to God.

If it is contended that without the proximity of God, Prakṛti alone was responsible for bringing this world into existence, many difficulties will arise. Prakṛti, in the first place, is insentient, inert and cannot by herself create anything; secondly, when Prakṛti was pure in the beginning, how did she manifest so many diversities at a later stage of her own accord without any ground for the same, unless she already contained the germs of these diversities? If it is held that such is the character of Prakṛti, she must have

possessed this character from the very beginning, and if she possessed this character from the very beginning, then it is established that the world as we know it, which is nothing but a transformation of Prakṛti, has been in existence from time without beginning. Therefore, it is neither proved by the Śāstras nor established by reasoning that Prakṛti was stainless in the beginning, and that the world came into existence without any predisposing cause either of its own accord or through the will of God. Therefore, it should be understood that the Paramātmā (the Universal Soul), the Jīvātmā (or the individual soul) and Prakṛti with the diversities of her creation, and their mutual relations—all these are without beginning. Among these, the world as a creation of Prakṛti and Karma are without beginning as a never-ending process of creation and destruction. They do not maintain a uniformity of character. Therefore it is said that they have a beginning and an end, that they are ephemeral, transient and perishable. Prakṛti as well as the relation between Prakṛti and Jīva are without beginning, but both have an end.

If the subject is carefully analysed and the conclusions of the Śāstras are deeply pondered over, Prakṛti also will appear as beginningless, though having an end. According to the conception of Vedānta, she covers only a portion of the Paramātmā. When Knowledge, as understood by Vedānta, is attained, this beginningless Prakṛti, too, comes to an end. Even the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems of philosophy, which base their conclusions mainly on reasoning and which hold both Prakṛti (Matter) and Puruṣa (Spirit) to be beginningless and eternal, recognize the contact between these two principles as beginningless, yet, subject to termination. They hold the absence of contact between the two as synonymous with the absence of sorrow. This is salvation as understood by them.

They also hold that in the eye of the blessed Jīva who has attained this state of salvation, Prakṛti has come to an end; she exists only for those who do not possess Knowledge.

कृतार्थं प्रति नष्टमप्यनष्टं तदन्यसाधारणत्वात्।

(Yoga-Sūtras II. 22)

According to these schools of philosophy Prakṛti and Puruṣa are separately cognized because of this contact which is due to ignorance. When the saving knowledge dawns, the Ātmā is said to have reached the state of Kaivalya (exclusiveness, absoluteness); if all the Jīvas attain salvation, annihilation of Prakṛti is possible according to these systems of thought; for in the eyes of the liberated Jñānī, Prakṛti is totally annihilated. She persists only in the eyes of the ignorant due to their ignorance. But the view of the ignorant soul has no value. It is the view of the Jñānī that is really true and correct. Therefore, it cannot be proved in any case that Prakṛti will retain her existence even after all the Jīvas have attained their salvation. A careful scrutiny of all facts shows that like Nescience, Prakṛti and Karma, too; are without beginning, eternal and always existent in the same state of being.

The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems recognize the existence of a plurality of substances; but even a superficial examination is enough to negative the existence of these substances. Just as an embankment of sand is washed away by rains, or as objects seen in dream no longer retain their separate existence after awakening, but are all reduced into the seer, similarly a careful examination of facts will negative the existence of diverse objects, and reduce them all into the existence of the one Self. If something other than this Ātmā is recognized, you create a room for what you call Swabhāva (Nature) of Prakṛti but this Prakṛti will last only till the appearance of knowledge. In the case of a dream you cannot prove the existence of anything else than the dreamer. On the awakening of a person from the

dream of this world these material elements such as the ether, the air, and so on, are reduced to the same condition to which elements seen in a dream are reduced after one has awakened from the dream. Let us therefore consider what is the foundation of the separate existence of atoms of elements seen in a dream?

We have seen above that the different forms of moulds of matter are without beginning in the sense that their creation and destruction has been going on forever. Now the question remains, 'How were they moulded originally at the beginning of creation'? Did they come into being of their own accord, or were they created by the Formless Divinity assuming a Form, or moulded into these shapes by the Formless Divinity Itself? And, lastly if the Formless Divinity assumed a finite form, how could He remain all-pervading?

This question is not so difficult as to require much exercise of thought for a solution. If we calmly consider this question even for a short while, it will present an easy solution. At the beginning of a new creation all these different forms or bodies of Jīvas were brought forth according to their respective Guṇas (characteristics) and Karmas (actions) by the contact of God, our Father, and Prakṛti which is the universal Mother. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

‘My Prakṛti or Nature in her primordial, undeveloped state is the womb of all creatures; in that I place the seed (of consciousness). The birth of all beings follows from this combination of Matter and Spirit, O descendant of Bharata. Of all the bodies that take birth from different wombs, this Primordial Matter is the Mother, and I am the procreating Father, O son of Kuntī!’ *

* मम	योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म	तस्मिन्	गर्भं	दधाम्यहम् ।
सम्भवः	सर्वभूतानां	ततो	भवति	भारत ॥
सर्वयोनिषु	कौन्तेय	मूर्तयः	सम्भवन्ति	याः ।
तासां	ब्रह्म	महद्योनिरहं	बीजप्रदः	पिता ॥

The question may be asked, when both the substances were formless in the beginning, how did gross physical forms come out of their union? The answer to this is that the phenomenon may be understood from the analogy of water, which is formless when it remains in the rays of the sun but is transformed into vapour through the friction of air, then gradually into cloud and raindrops, and is finally reduced into solid blocks of snow. In the same manner this creation, which lay hidden in Prakṛti in the beginning, revealed itself in these solid forms through friction of Prakṛti and God. It will have to be admitted that blocks of snow do not exist in the sky; and had they been there, they could not rest there. That the space is formless is also clear to the naked eye, but clouds are formed in no time in the clear sky. Science and Logic have proved that it is the water existing in the formless atomic state in the rays of the sun which is transformed into cloud and raindrops. Similarly, Formless fire existing in space is occasionally seen in the form of lightning flashes in the clouds, when this fire descends on earth it burns up and destroys all that it touches. When even gross elements like fire and water take form leaving their formless state, what is there to wonder at, if the formless creation should assume form as the result of contact between the formless Divinity and Prakṛti?

One thing should also be understood in this connection, viz., that a solid form invariably dissolves itself into the subtle state from which it takes its origin. Lightning appears in the pure, formless sky through the friction of air and dissolves in the same sky. From friction in fire, water takes its origin and is formed into solid ice through the effect of cold. That very water when heated by fire, is reduced into vapour and finally disappears in the formless sky. In the same manner, the physical forms of the various Jīvas originate at the beginning of creation from Prakṛti, according to their respective Guṇas and Karmas,

and in the end dissolve in the self-same Prakṛti. This cycle of creation and destruction is without beginning.

Prakṛti is sometimes active, and sometimes inactive. Such is her character. When the three Guṇas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, are in a state of equilibrium, this Prakṛti which is nothing but a combination of the three Guṇas, is inactive, and when this equilibrium of the three Guṇas is disturbed, she becomes active. It is the active Prakṛti which through contact with Īśwara (God) brings forth the gross forms of Jīvas lying dormant in her womb. The Lord says:—

“Arjuna, with me as the supervisor, Nature brings forth the whole creation both animate and inanimate: it is due to this cause that the wheel of Samsāra is revolving.”*

The analogy of fire is very helpful in understanding how God, though formless, assumes a form, and yet remains all-pervading. Fire in the formless state is present everywhere; it is that very fire which is lodged within us to help us digest our food. Without fire food cannot be digested, and if it becomes manifest, it will reduce the body to ashes. This shows that within us fire stays in an unmanifest state. This all-pervading, formless, unmanifest fire assumes a form when kindled by means of fuel or friction. Even when unmanifest, fire is present in such objects as wood, etc. Were it not present there, how would it appear through friction? That very fire when extinguished goes back into the formless state. When fire becomes manifest at a particular place in the form of a flame, none can say because it is manifest here, it has ceased to exist in all other places. It is an undoubted fact that though manifest at one place, or even simultaneously at many places, the all-pervasiveness of the formless fire remains undisturbed. Similarly, the Paramātmā, even when manifest at a particular place or at various places simultaneously through contact with

* मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् । हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥

Māyā, is present at the same time at all other places in his unmanifest form. Nothing can interfere with his all-pervasiveness or wholeness. The illustration of fire has been taken simply to give the reader a rough idea of the subject. As a matter of fact there can be no comparison between the all-pervasiveness of the Paramātmā and the pervasiveness of fire.

Question: What was the object of God in creating Prakṛti and the world?

Answer: Prakṛti was not created by God. Prakṛti means Nature, and Nature is something which naturally exists for all time. There is no doubt that the world with its moving and unmoving objects was created by God. The unmotivated Grace of the all-pervasive, all-just and all-merciful Paramātmā, should be understood to be the only motive for His creating this universe. He reveals the forms of moving creatures according to their Guṇas and Karmas in the previous cycle of creation. Being a just ruler without any self-interest and attachment, God is held to be a non-doer, even though creating the forms of the Jīvas according to their respective Guṇas and Karmas. His dispensations are always full of mercy though following a prescribed code and are intended to remove the suffering of the Jīvas. Occasionally He goes to the length of bringing His Prakṛti under control and manifesting Himself in a Form in His attempt to confer the highest spiritual good on the Jīvas. It is the duty of all Jīvas to worship the Paramātmā, who is their dearest friend, and whose mercy is so motiveless and disinterested.



Prakṛti and Puruṣa

The world consists of only two principles—matter and life. Puruṣa represents life and Prakṛti represents matter. Puruṣa is the seer and Prakṛti the object of sight. Puruṣa is immutable. Both these principles are patent to everyone. The existence of both these must be recognized in everyone of us. Of these two, that which sees, is the seer and the other which is visible in the shape of creation, is the object of sight.

All Individual souls or Jīvas are fragments of the Paramātmā. A spark of fire is not different from fire, the two are identical in essence; even so the Jīva too is not different from the Paramātmā. This visible universe being an evolute of Prakṛti, is nothing but the Prakṛti. It is only a modification of Prakṛti—

कार्यकरणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।

The above line from the Gītā declares Prakṛti to be responsible for bringing into existence the effect (creation) and the instruments (senses). The five elements such as ether, etc., and their five attributes, viz., sound etc., constitute the effect. The five organs of perception, the five organs of action plus the mind, the faculty of discrimination and ego—these thirteen constitute the instruments. Prakṛti is the source of these all. Thus being an evolute of Prakṛti the whole of this objective world is nothing but Prakṛti itself.

Now, let us try to understand the relation between Prakṛti and Puruṣa. Prakṛti is not a part of Puruṣa. She is His Śakti (Energy). Śakti (Energy) is not different from the Śaktimān. At the time of the final dissolution of creation the whole of this objective world gets dissolved

into Prakṛti. Then Prakṛti alone remains and the objective world disappears. The Vedānta believes Prakṛti to be indefinable and the Sāṃkhya system conceives her to be beginningless and eternal. The Yoga system also declares Prakṛti to be beginningless and eternal. When active she manifests herself in the form of this objective world, and when she is inactive she remains in her unmanifest state. The process of evolution in the objective world is as follows:—

From Prakṛti in her original state evolves the Mahattattva which is also known as the principle of Cosmic Intelligence. From Cosmic Intelligence springs up the Cosmic Ego and from the Cosmic Ego arises the Cosmic Mind. From the same ego evolves space or ether, from ether air, from air fire, from fire water and from water the earth. Some of the great Ṛṣis have declared these to be the cause of subtle Tanmātrās as well as of the senses. Some have traced the origin of these Tanmātrās to the Ego and the others to the Mahattattva itself. They, however, mean one and the same thing. The Cosmic Intelligence, the Cosmic Ego and the Cosmic Mind are three different aspects or phases of the same principle, viz., the Mind (अन्तःकरण). From the subtle elements or the Tanmātrās evolve the five senses of perception, the five organs of action and the five objects of the senses of perception. The totality of these constitutes the objective world.

From the above exposition it is clear beyond doubt that Prakṛti is the root cause of this objective world. Speech cannot describe her in her original state, because speech itself is only an evolute (कार्य) of Prakṛti. Hence Prakṛti is regarded as indefinable. Mind and intellect too are effects of Prakṛti and are, therefore, incapable of knowing her. Hence she is called incomprehensible and uninvestigable. Thus even though Prakṛti is beyond the ken of speech, mind and

intellect, yet her existence is proved beyond doubt by her effect, namely, the objective world.

Prakṛti and Puruṣa both are omnipresent. The cause always pervades its effect. From the analogy of water pervading ice the all-pervasiveness of Prakṛti can be easily understood; but the Puruṣa being very subtle, His pervasiveness is not so easily and so clearly comprehensible, yet His pervasiveness is even greater than that of Prakṛti. Prakṛti is only the cause, but Puruṣa—God is the greater Cause. It is He who holds the entire creation.

This greater Cause, God, pervades the whole of Prakṛti and her effects. It has been stated before that the cause always pervades its effect. From ether evolves air, therefore air is pervaded by ether. From air evolves fire therefore fire is pervaded by air and ether both. From fire evolves water, from water earth, therefore the earth is pervaded by all the other four elements, viz., ether, air, fire and water. Even so Prakṛti which is the cause of all these elements pervades them all. This Prakṛti however is only an Energy (शक्ति) of Puruṣa, the Śāktimān. Therefore, the great Cause of all, the Puruṣa or the principle of Consciousness, pervades both inert matter (Prakṛti) and the evolute of that matter, viz., this objective world.

Now, let us try to understand whether God, Consciousness or Puruṣa is the material cause or the efficient cause of this creation. Truly speaking, He is both the material and the efficient cause. The Lord says in the Gītā:— 'चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः', that is, 'The four orders of society (viz., the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra) were created by Me classifying them according to their prenatal qualities and apportioning corresponding duties to them.' Here the Lord declares Himself to be the efficient cause. But, 'मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते

सचराचरम्;’ ‘Arjuna, with Me as the supervisor, Nature brings forth the whole creation, both the movable and the immovable’—here He declares Prakṛti to be the efficient cause. How can there be two instrumental causes? The answer to this is that when Prakṛti carries on the process of creation with the Conscious Puruṣa as her Lord and Master, and under His supervision, then the virtual creator is the Paramātmā Himself. Prakṛti is only His agent. Thus really speaking God alone is the efficient cause of the creation. And almost all are unanimous in recognizing God, the principle of Consciousness, to be the efficient cause. As regards His being the material cause there is some difference of opinion. But careful investigation will prove that God is also the material cause of creation according to the viewpoints of Jñāna and Bhakti both. According to the viewpoint of Jñāna (Knowledge) the matter may be understood on the analogy of the dreamer who through imagination transforms himself into a dream-world of his own of which he himself becomes the observer. Now there is no material cause of the dream-world here other than the conscious dreamer himself. Even so when Prakṛti is perceived with her modes or attributes, there, truly speaking, nothing exists besides the Paramātmā. Prakṛti with all her evolutes is superimposed on the Paramātmā. And according to the viewpoint of Devotion, Prakṛti should be recognized as the Śakti or Energy of the Paramātmā, and Śakti or Energy is never different from the Śaktimān. The whole of this objective world is only an extension of Prakṛti, hence it is nothing but the Paramātmā. Therefore, the Paramātmā is its material cause. This view of God being both the material and efficient cause of creation is clearly supported by statements

in the Gītā, such as “Vāsudeva is all”,¹ “All this is permeated by Me”,² “There is nothing else beside Me”,³ “He from whom is the emanation of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded”,⁴ “I am the source of all creation; everything in the world moves because of me;”⁵ etc.

Here it may be argued that if God is the author, the quality of authorship of agency can certainly be attributed to Him. Our answer to this is that God in reality is not a doer. He is a non-doer—‘तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम्’. The Lord says, “Though the author of this creation, know Me, the immortal Lord, to be a non-doer.”

Ātmā is only a synonym of Puruṣa. According to the Sāṅkhya system Puruṣas are many. The philosophy of Yoga also supports the view of many Puruṣas, but it also recognizes the existence of a supreme Puruṣa or Īśwara. Of these, while the Jīvas are many, the supreme Puruṣa or Īśwara is one. The Pūrva Mīmāṃsā also believes in a plurality of Puruṣas. The Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya systems recognize two types of Puruṣas, the Jīvātmā (individual) and the Paramātmā (Oversoul). The Vedānta recognizes only one Puruṣa, and not many. All these systems (in whatever form it may be) have recognized the Ātmā or Puruṣa, to be a conscious substance. Now these views about the Ātmā being one or many are all true according to the various standpoints. For the goal of all philosophical systems is the welfare of the Ātmā, and the teachings of all being conducive to welfare of the Ātmā they are all correct. An individual can attain salvation through right knowledge of the Ātmā by following any course of discipline, no matter whether

1. ‘वासुदेवः सर्वमिति’

2. ‘मया ततमिदं सर्वम्’

3. ‘मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति।’

4. ‘यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।’

5. ‘अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते।’

he believes the Ātmā to be one or many. Subsequent to the attainment of salvation none can truly describe what the Ātmā is like, because that state is something indescribable. The fact is, he alone who has realized the Ātmā knows what it is like. So long as the Paramātmā is not realized it will be easy and better for people to guide their conduct according to the following lines of thought.

With regard to the Puruṣa it has to be remembered that there are two varieties of Puruṣas—the Jīvātmā (individual soul) and the Paramātmā (God). Jīvātmās are many and Paramātmā is one. The Paramātmā, again though one, has been recognized to have two aspects—Saguṇa (with attribute) and Nirguṇa (absolute). That aspect of Paramātmā which is united with Prakṛti, the originator of the three Guṇas or modes viz., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, is known as the Saguṇa aspect. And that which is devoid of Guṇas is the Nirguṇa, or the absolute aspect. It should, however, be remembered that the Saguṇa and Nirguṇa are only two aspects of one and the same Paramātmā who does not admit of duality. Paramātmā is the totality or aggregate of both these aspects. The conception may be illustrated by the analogy of ether or space. Which when it holds in a portion of it, air, fire, water and earth may be termed space with four material elements and the rest of it, which does not contain those elements, is pure or absolute space. The Lord made use of this illustration in the Gītā mentioning only air in place of the four elements.

“Just as the extensive and all-pervading air (which is born of ether) always remains in ether, likewise know that all beings (sprung as they are from My thought) abide in Me.” *

Space is at once the support and cause of air, etc., and

* यथाकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान्।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय॥

(Gītā IX. 6)

also pervades them all. In the same manner the Paramātmā is the support and cause of the entire creation and also pervades it. Let us consider the point a little more closely. Take for instance the case of the cloud hanging in space; it originates in space, exists in space and finally gets dissolved into space. Similarly air, fire, water and earth also take their origin from space, exist in space and ultimately get dissolved into space one after another. Ākāśa being their source and origin is the cause of their manifestation. And they stand as effect in relation to Ākāśa. The effect is pervaded, and the cause is pervasive. Ākāśa, therefore, pervades these elements and they rest in Ākāśa, which there is for their support or foundation. Prakṛti being the source and origin of all the elements including space is their cause and pervades the whole of this objective world. And all these rest on the foundation of Prakṛti. Prakṛti on her part is the energy or Śakti of the Paramātmā; therefore, being the basis or foundation of Prakṛti herself, the Paramātmā is the Great Cause of the entire creation as also of Prakṛti. It is the Paramātmā who pervades them all, and it is the Paramātmā, again, who is their sole foundation.

That aspect of God which embraces this creation is the Saguna aspect; beyond this, where there is no creation, where He is absolute, that is the state of transcendence, the state beyond the Guṇas. The Saguna aspect, again, may be further divided into two varieties (1) that with form, and (2) that having no form or formless. Just as the earth is both with form and formless—with form in the rose, as formless in its smell, just as fire in its latent state is formless and with form when manifest, or just as water in its pure atomic state in the sky is formless, and is with form when condensed into the shape of a cloud, rain and hail, even so the all-pervasive Saguna aspect of the Paramātmā although

continuing in its formless state, manifests itself in this world with attributes even in an embodied form. Just as the unmanifest and manifest aspects of fire, water and earth, although representing two distinct states, are essentially one, there being no difference between them even so there is no difference between the absolute Formless state, the Formless state with Guṇas and the Embodied Form with Guṇas of the Paramātmā. They together form the entirety of the Paramātmā. This has been made clear by the Lord in the following line of the Gītā:— 'साधिभूताधिदैवं मां साधियज्ञं च ये विदुः' This is the integral Brahma of the Gītā. This is Puruṣottama—the supreme Puruṣa. It is this entirety of the Lord which should be worshipped. If a worshipper ignores the Saguṇa aspect and worships only the Nirguṇa, or absolute aspect, he worships the same God. Even so he who worships the Embodied form or even the Formless Qualified aspect, worships the self-same God. All such worshippers finally attain the same Paramātmā. But the best worshipper is certainly he who worships the Entire Brahma, knowing well and respecting all His aspects. He realizes the Paramātmā easily and speedily. If it is asked, what then is the difference between the individual soul (Jīvātmā) and the Paramātmā? Our answer is that Jīvātmā is the worshipper, and Paramātmā is the object of worship. The Paramātmā is eternally and entirely free from faults like partiality and prejudice; results of actions such as merit and sin do not accrue to Him and He is not subject of joy and sorrow; while the Jīva, being ignorant, is subject to these emotions, is swayed by likes and dislikes, and his actions also are productive of merit and sin. Of course, the Jīva can be rid of all these on attaining knowledge of God's reality through His grace. His ignorance is responsible for all these and they disappear as soon as the reality about God is known. One can attain

this knowledge by treading the path of Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga or Jñānayoga.

Now if it is asked whether subsequent to the realization of the Paramātmā difference with Him still persists, or whether identity is established with Him, our answer is that the Paramātmā appears to the worshipper, identical or otherwise, according as he conceives Him to be. Here it may be argued that so long as the Paramātmā appears to him as identical or otherwise, it is evident that it is the conception of the worshipper which makes Him appear as such and that he has not yet realized Him, whereas the question related to the state which stood above the states of identity and difference, nay, which was the consummation of the two was designated as the realization of the Highest Truth or attainment of the Paramātmā, the state which the Vedas describe as indescribable. Our answer to this is that none else can describe the state which the Vedas have described as indescribable. Therefore, it should be understood that this state is indescribable. Again, it may be asked; when that state is indescribable, what is the proof of its existence? In answer to this it may be said that it does not require any proof. It is self-evident. That most important fact concerning it, is that it is this state which established all proofs and the existence of all objects. The Vedas and other scriptures (Śāstras) as well as the revelations of saints, all declare it to be an open fact. It is the realization of this state that the Vedas principally aim at. Such is that indescribable thing.

It is this state which is known as the Puruṣa, and His Śakti or Energy is Prakṛti. The three Guṇas are products of that Prakṛti, hence we may also declare her as consisting of the three Guṇas. The Vedānta and the Sāṅkhya systems of philosophy conceive Prakṛti to be the state of equilibrium of the three Guṇas and the three Guṇas to be her very essence.

But the Lord has described the Guṇas as products of Prakṛti in the Gītā. For instance, He says:—

‘The Guṇas born of Prakṛti.’¹ (III. 5)

‘Know the Guṇas to be Prakṛti-born.’² (XIII. 19)

‘Guṇas which are products of Prakṛti.’³ (XIII. 21)

‘Guṇas which are born of Prakṛti.’⁴ (XIV. 5)

‘The three Guṇas which are born of Prakṛti.’⁵ (XVIII. 40)

The Vedānta treats Prakṛti as without beginning, but having an end. The Sāṅkhya, and the Yoga systems treat her as without beginning and eternal. In the Gītā the Lord has described her as without beginning, but not eternal. He has declared as eternal only the one beginningless unmanifest Consciousness (VIII. 20). Nor has the Lord described Prakṛti as having an end, or transient. Therefore, she should be treated as indefinable. The Lord did not describe her as eternal, firstly because it is only the beginningless absolute and unmanifest Paramātmā who is eternal. Secondly, if she is regarded as eternal, then discipline of knowledge will have no standing. Similarly, He did not describe her as transient, firstly, because she persists even after the final dissolution, when all the objective world gets dissolved into Prakṛti and through her proximity to Paramātmā at the beginning of Great creation (महासर्ग) the objective world again manifests itself, from which she appears as though eternal. Moreover, had the Lord described her as without beginning but having an end (or transient), the glory of the path of Devotion would have disappeared. This shows that both the paths (of Knowledge and Devotion) are approved

1. ‘.....प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः’

2. ‘गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसम्भवान्’

3. ‘प्रकृतिजान् गुणान्’

4. ‘गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः’

5. ‘प्रकृतिजैः.....त्रिभिर्गुणैः’

by the Lord, and it was, therefore, that He described Prakṛti neither as eternal, nor as transient.

This proves that Prakṛti is indefinable. Even the Yoga and Sāṅkhya systems maintain that after the attainment of knowledge of Paramātmā, the Jīvātmā gets disjoined with Prakṛti once for all.

All philosophical systems maintain that on the realization of self, the state of 'Absolution' (कैवल्य) is attained. The soul then ceases to have any connection with Prakṛti and her evolutes. According to the Vedānta, nothing exists besides Brahma, which is consolidated Knowledge and Bliss. The Sāṅkhya, and Yoga systems maintain that Prakṛti continues to exist even after the realization of self, but he who has realized the Self ceases to have anything to do with her. All these virtually mean the same thing. No system declares that the connection of Puruṣa with Prakṛti persists even after the realization of Self, and when the connection ceases there can be no objection even if she remains, nor can there be any harm if she ceases to exist. A person awakened from a dream does not maintain any relation with his dream-world; in that case why should he object if the creations of his dream continue to exist somewhere?

From the above exposition it is clear that so long as the objective world is perceived and we maintain some relation with it, duality of Prakṛti and Puruṣa will persist in the shape of life and matter, seer and the object of sight, or knower and the object of knowledge, and the whole creation is only an amplification of these two.

Love—the Only Means of Realizing God

Man possesses an inherent aversion for pain and attraction for pleasure. No one in this world courts suffering, or is averse to happiness. He, however, mistakes things that are full of pain to be so many founts of joy and falls an easy prey to their temptation. A fowler strews corn to entrap birds. And the foolish birds not realizing that they are the means of ensnaring them are misled to regard them as a source of pleasure. A flame appears attractive and pleasant to the moth which rushes into it and is reduced to ashes. Even so the wide net spread by Prakṛti appears pleasant to us and we get entangled in it. Just as a wise bird finding other birds caught in a trap overcomes its temptation for corn and does not fall into the trap, even so men of wisdom do not fall a prey to the allurements of the senses. The ignorant, however, easily yield to their temptations and suffer consequently time and again. Ferocious beasts such as the lion and the tiger are not so harmful and oppressive as is the attachment for wife and children, wealth and honour, and above all, the body. It is through ignorance that all these appear so attractive, whereas in consequence they are all attended with sorrow.

None of these things is lasting. That which is not lasting becomes in the end, at the time of its disappearance, a cause of suffering and sorrow. There is no pleasure even in their enjoyment. A dainty dish appears tasteful only in the beginning; take more of it and you will feel satiated. Similarly, other objects of pleasure, such as the embrace of a woman, will cause disgust to you at a certain stage. There is no joy even in wealth. Suppose a certain individual becomes master of lakhs of rupees, he

builds houses, purchases cars and makes the best of a life of ease and enjoyment. Then through an adverse turn of fortune he loses his wealth. All the objects of enjoyment forsake him one by one. Now the very memory of his lost fortune causes him intense pain. His heart begins to burn in jealousy when he sees other men of affluence moving about and enjoying their lives. Similarly, seminal weakness and other complaints occasioned by excessive enjoyment to women become a source of terrible suffering. He contemplates in his mind that he will never indulge in that habit again if he recovers from that disease; but as soon as he is well again, his love of enjoyment gets the better of his reason and he takes to the same course once again. The enjoyments of the other world, too, are likewise rooted in sorrow. The earning of wealth, its protection, application to some use, its exit through various channels, and above all its loss—all these are sources of suffering. One has also very often to have recourse to unfair dealings in earning wealth. His better sense deters him from this course, but the impulse of greed goads him to take to that course only once and not to do it again. He finds himself placed on the horns of a dilemma. His heart becomes a battle-ground between two opposing impulses. The pure (Sāttvika) and gross (Tāmasika) impulses offer battle to each other, and he finds himself in a miserable condition. Ultimately, just as a cat overpowers the mouse, the forces of Tāmasa gain complete mastery over him. There are very few people who can resist them. One has to take great pains in preserving the wealth he has accumulated. He finds himself unable to make a gift of it to anybody, and while he is thus busy in protecting it, Death approaches him. He then begins to repent for his folly and says to himself, 'Oh, what have I done? In vain have I amassed all this wealth, now that I am forced to leave it all.' Thus, full of grief and remorse he departs from this world. The long and short of it is that the

enjoyments of the world are like poison sweetened with honey. They are invested with a false glamour, and the pleasure that we find in them exists only in our imagination, and is not real. It is like a mirage, it has no trace of joy about it. Is it not then sheer folly to run after this pleasure? True happiness lies in the Divine only. He is the embodiment of supreme Bliss—this is what the saints, the sages and the scriptures say. The joy of sovereignty over the three regions is insignificant compared to this bliss. The Gītā says:—

“And having obtained which he does not reckon any other gain as greater than that and established in which he is not moved even by great sorrow” (VI. 22).

On the attainment of this state of Bliss one will not lose his serenity even if his body is hacked to pieces. There will be no diminution in his joy even if he loses his worldly possessions. Realizing the Paramātmā he becomes one with Him, the embodiment of Bliss itself. He no longer feels any want. The Gītā says:—

यावानर्थं उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।

(II. 46)

Just as in a place flooded with water on all sides there is no necessity for a well, similarly on the attainment of the bliss of identity with Brahma one no longer requires anything else. This incomparable bliss is attainable only through Love. Shift this love from worldly objects, such as wife and children, wealth and honour and so on, which are attended with sorrow and are detrimental to our spiritual well-being, let us direct it towards that all-blissful Divine so as to be able to attain that unbroken and immutable supreme Bliss. The above discussion will go to prove that the true welfare of humanity lies in cultivating dispassion towards the world, and Love for the Paramātmā.

What is True Love

This Love is, in fact, indefinable; it cannot be properly described. We can make only some guesses about its nature. One who possesses this Love need not be asked to cultivate it. A greedy man does not require to be told that he should cultivate love for money. The very name of the philosopher's stone is dear to him, even though none of his ancestors may have known what this stone is like. His face brightens up as soon as he hears about it. Even so, where there is Love of God, the mention of His very Name sends a thrill into the heart of the lover. Talk of God is as dear to the heart of a lover of God as the talk of wealth is dear to the greedy, or the talk of lovely women is dear to a lover of women. Just as the very mention of the name of a dear friend arrests our attention and the talk about him sounds agreeable to our ears, even so the story of God's greatness and glory is pleasing to the ears of a lover of God. There is a world of difference between Love and worldly attachment (मोह). Love is free from all tinge of passion; while worldly attachment is tainted with desire. There is an element of selfishness in worldly attachment and such attachment is liable to disappear; but Love is selfless and constant. The fondness of the child for its mother is not love but infatuation, inasmuch as it seeks to remain in close proximity to the mother, but does not find itself disposed to obey the commands of the mother. No such thing will happen where there is Love. A lover is always anxious to make his beloved happy, and to do some good offices to him. Such lovers, however, are rarely to be found. Such a disposition is generally found only in the Lord and His devotees. In Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa the following words are found addressed to Śrī Rāma:—

“O slayer of demons, Thyself and Thy devotees alone are the true and selfless benefactors of the world.”

Śaṅkara says, “O Umā, none of these—the preceptor, the parents and the relatives—can equal Rāma as a benefactor.”

“Gods, human beings and demigods—all these have this character in common, viz., that their love has a selfish motive behind it.”

Describing the characteristics of true friendship Śrī Rāma says to Sugrīva:—

“He who does not share the woes of his friend, his very sight is productive of evil.”

“A true friend will regard his own sorrow, heavy as the mountain, as no more heavy than a particle of dust; whereas his friend’s sorrow though light as straw will weigh on him heavy as the Meru (mountain).”

“One with whom the above attitude is not natural, why should that depraved soul extend his hand to establish friendship?”

“A true friend will deter his friend from following evil ways and guide him along the right path. He will bring out before the public only the strong points of his friend’s character, and suppress his weak points.”

“He will feel no hitch in giving to and taking from his friend and will always try to serve his best interests to the best of his strength and ability.”

“In his friend’s adversity he will show him more attention than ever before. Such are the qualifications of a virtuous friend, says the Śruti.”

“O friend, depending on my strength, give up all sorrow. I shall do your work in everyway possible.”

The Lord literally carried out all that He had said. Bearing Himself the pang of separation from Śrī Sītā, He relieved at first the terrible suffering of Sugrīva.

Pure, unalloyed Love is found only among saintly men. Lust and infatuation reign supreme in the world. It appears

to a person that his wife and brother are very fond of him; but their love, too, is of the nature of infatuation. Had this not been the case, they would have behaved according as it pleased him; they would have moulded their faith and conduct according to his pleasure.

If, for instance, he wore khaddar, and had a liking of khaddar, his son, brother and wife, too, would have taken to khaddar. But this is rarely found. The reason is that the element of love in their attachment is very meagre; lust and infatuation are predominant in it. That is why their conduct is guided by their own sweet will. A wife of this type loves her husband for her own happiness, and not for the happiness of the husband. This is not Love. Even such attachment when conceived towards God, is good, but Love is a different thing altogether. When this attachment is accompanied by pure motive, there is nothing like it. Such a pure love can be easily attained by spiritual aspirants, a lesser amount of labour is involved in its cultivation than in pursuing the love of gold. For in the latter case, it is we who love gold, and get no response from the other side, i.e., gold, which is a material substance. God, however, is not insentient. He is a supreme Lover Himself. His love for us is more intense than what we may ourselves bear towards Him. That is why this love bears fruit more quickly. In the same manner, great souls (Mahātmās) too love us only for our good. If we offer but once our Love towards them, they will return it four times. They do not have any selfish motive in returning that love.

Even motherly love is tainted by infatuation, and some amount of selfish desire. She expects her son to perform her obsequies and offer annual oblations to her after her death and to serve her in her old age. In some cases the love of a mother is marked by pure infatuation and has no tinge of

self-interest in it. Take, for instance, the case of an old woman, who is excessively fond of her grandson. She expects nothing from the child in return, because she knows she will die before the child attains maturity. Similarly suppose a mother has got a son of disreputable conduct, evil-minded and born only to heap troubles on his parents and other members of the family. He commits a theft and is sent to jail. The mother weeps for him. She does not expect to derive any happiness from him; still she tries her utmost to bring him out of jail because she is fondly attached to him. Love is something altogether different from this. The greatest good of an individual lies in developing disinterested and exclusive Love for the Paramātmā. Love, which though disinterested is yet meagre, cannot bring God-realization soon. Through pure and exclusive love alone one can purchase this priceless commodity. The love that is directed towards objects of enjoyment such as wife and children, or towards enjoyments in the celestial region, is no love of God, it is love for these objects of enjoyments. Although it is good to have love for salvation, the highest type of love is that which is cultivated for its own sake (without any sense of return); that is called Pure Love. The love between a spiritual teacher and those who assemble to hear his discourses, too, cannot be called altogether free from self-interest; for had it been so, why should the teacher desire that more people should attend his discourses and that all should be present at the right time. This shows that there is some interest involved. That interest is, no doubt, of an exalted type. Even those who attend his discourses have various interests to serve. Some have wealth for their object, others come with the hope that it will intensify their meditation and Bhajana; there are still others who seek honour, while others come under the belief that there attending the discourses

will do them some good in whatever sense it may be. These are the various interests that guide those who attend his discourse. If the teacher says something against the will of the hearers, they refuse to hear it, or ignore it altogether. If the teacher for some reason or other begins to put forward his own interest, his hearers may tolerate him for some time, but at last they will feel disgusted. Even in the efforts for the propagation of devotion, if people detect some selfish motive of the preacher, they immediately forsake him. There is hardly anyone who may pass the test of a saint taken without previous notice. Those, who are put to the test will take him to be either a lunatic or a selfish man, and may ultimately forsake him. Here is an illustration:—

There were two spiritual strivers in a village, who used to beg for their daily food in the village and bringing the same under a tree outside the village they used to partake of it once during the day, and for the rest of the day and night they used to keep themselves absorbed in their spiritual exercises. Their pure life and their devotion to Bhajana arrested the attention of the villagers who began to pay frequent visits to them. Their fame spread throughout the village. The report even reached the ears of the ruler of that territory who made up his mind to pay his respects for them. People came and informed them that the king would come for their Darśana that day. They took it to be a great calamity. They thought an aspirant would fall from his ideal in no time if he received honour and applause frequently, and began to relish them. Bearing this truth in mind, the two aspirants when they saw the king's party coming at a distance started a false quarrel among themselves over the division of their day's food. The king's party arrived when they were in the thick of the quarrel. Finding them quarrelling like that over loaves, the king thought the saints were hardly

worth anything. He, therefore, returned disappointed to his palace. When love and respect are scared away even at the sight of a false show of self-interest, it is well-nigh impossible for true love to exist where genuine self-interest prevails. Therefore, our Love towards God should be purely disinterested. There is nothing in this world which is equal in worth to genuine, exclusive and pure love; God is realized only through that Love; that is the price one has to pay for God-realization. Once this Love is awakened, everything except the Lord, becomes insipid. We worship God, and yet He does not accept our worship. How is this to be accounted for? The reason is, Love is wanting in us. He is bound to accept our worship provided there is love in it. The Lord proclaimed it in the Gītā with His own sacred lips:—

“Whosoever offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of purified intellect, and delightfully partake of that article offered by him with love” (IX. 26).

God does not hunger for our offering of fruit, flower or leaf. He hungers only for our Love. He is always on the look out for a true lover in this world. A true lover is he who while allowing himself to be flayed alive for the sake of God, will feel a stream of joy flowing through every pore of his body. If God accepts the things he calls his own, his pleasure knows no bounds. He feels and rightly so, that through that acceptance he has been cured of his egoistic sense; for so long as one feels a certain thing to be his own, it will not be accepted even by a noble soul, to say nothing of God. And the moment our offering is accepted by God, it may be taken for granted that our sense of egoism has disappeared. As a matter of fact everything on earth belongs to God, it is through error that we imagine it belongs to us. It is the idea of possession that has to be radically removed.

The day God accepts us with all our possessions, we may take it for granted that from that day He has become our own!

When pure Love for God is developed, one no longer entertains fear of, or love for anything else in the world, nor does he care any more for dishonour or infamy. Just as a strong flood uproots and carries away all trees on the banks of the Ganges, even so all ideas of honour and dishonour are washed away by the strong current of Love. Just as the mental current of a Yogī established in meditation flows only towards God, even so the current of Love begins to flow towards God. The joy felt in this state is truly indescribable. One is purged of all evils such as the sense of shame, fear and honour born of the ego, the different pairs of opposites cease to have any effect on him and the lover becomes as dead to the world as a corpse. The Lord is always subservient to the will of such a lover. The Lord offers His all to a devotee who offers all that he possesses, to Him. When Love grows in intensity it expresses itself through horripilation. Just as the ocean heaves and swells when it observes the full moon in the sky, even so the heart of a lover begins to dance out of joy when he beholds with his own eyes the soul-captivating beauty of the lotus-like face of the all-beautiful Lord. The ocean of Love within his heart swells and overflows, the heart can no longer contain it; his voice gets choked, words come falteringly from his lips, Love begins to flow like a stream through his eyes and nose and in the end reaching the subtle nerves under the eye-brows and the skull makes the Lover totally unconscious. His condition is then reduced to that of a lifeless statue.

When the devotee begins to pine for the Lord, the Lord, too, begins to pine for the devotee. If Sītā wept and lamented for Rāma when she was taken away by Rāvaṇa

and kept confined in the Aśoka garden, Rāma also wept and lamented for Sītā when He searched her from forest to forest.


If we pine for the Lord as intensely as Rukmiṇī and Draupadī did, the Lord is sure to pine for us, and will certainly reveal Himself before us, God is not pleased by the mere mechanical observance of the rules of worship; He is a seeker of Love! Love is not governed by rules. Where the conduct is regulated by rules, Love is not of a high order. In Love stringency of rules and regulations is naturally absent. No conscious effort has to be made to break them. They fall off by themselves. It is in this state that true Love makes itself manifest. There is no outward show in this Love. The devotee becoming an embodiment of Love gets absorbed and merged in the Lord. This is Love in its purest state, which is the true form of God. The Gopīs of blessed memory possessed this highest state of Love. The mere sight of their Love dissolved and melted even inanimate objects, to say nothing of human beings! The very atmosphere of the place where this Love manifests itself helps to diffuse the intoxication of Love. The whole environment of the place where the Lover moves gets infected by Love. The place touched by the Lover, and even the dust touched by his feet gets transformed into Love. Only true lovers of God know the secret of this truth, and such Love can develop only in relation to God and not in relation to any other object. The story of Love which carried Śrī Uddhava off his feet, will similarly transport us into the region of Love, if we can but hear it. But where shall we get the privilege of hearing it? Such a thing cannot happen where there is a mere show of Love. It can happen only where there is genuine Love, and not a mere semblance of it.

When a person whose heart is pierced by the amorous

glances of a beautiful woman sees the whole world as pervaded only by her existence and moves in the world as a lunatic enjoying untold bliss in thoughts of her, although the object of his love is a mortal being, we cannot imagine the condition of that blessed being who has been pierced by the dart-like glances of the Divine Śyāmasundara, who is God-incarnate and the embodiment of Supreme Bliss. No one can imagine what will be the nature of ecstatic joy that he will feel intoxicated with, and what will he perceive in this world. Nor is there anything within our experience in this world which can be compared to this state. If the enjoyments of the world are likened to a particle of dust and the bliss of God perception is compared to the earth itself, if the former are likened to the image of the sun reflected in a mirror and the latter to the sun itself, even then the comparison would appear incongruous. Just as a figure made of ice cannot sound the depth of the ocean and describe it, similarly we cannot even guess the nature of this joy. In fact, like the figure of ice which gets dissolved in the ocean, the Lover of God is transformed into God Himself. He cannot be expected to give us even a rough idea of what God is like; for he no longer remains apart from God, while others cannot describe His true nature. The Lover no doubt appears to us as moving in the same body even after he has realized God, but as a matter of fact his body is then transformed into Love itself. He showers Love wherever he goes. Even an ordinary glance from him will drench people with the nectar of Love. When even such persons are rarely to be found, how much more difficult should it be to obtain a sight of God? But if there is Love, it becomes easy enough. God is all-merciful. Were He to judge us only by our actions, our redemption would have been a difficult job; but He judges us not by our actions. He gives Himself up to us in

return for Love. He who comes to know this secret surrenders himself to God and thereby succeeds realizing Him.

When Bharata was going to Citrakūṭa intoxicated with Love for Śrī Rāma, all inanimate objects that fell on the way turned animate, and all animate objects became lifeless as it were at the very sight of his Love. What was the condition of Bharata himself, whose very sight infused life into lifeless objects and made sentient creatures lifeless, as it were, could be known to Bharata alone. This type of unselfish Love is what is called pure Love, transcendent and stainless Love. It is free from all blemish and is exclusive in its nature. It is brightly effulgent, though not exactly like the sun; the effulgence it contains is the supreme stainless effulgence of Knowledge; it is sweeter and more immortalizing than ambrosia itself. We should all endeavour to realize this essence of true bliss. What we should do, therefore, is to cultivate dispassion towards all objects that provide only momentary enjoyment, but which are in essence the very roots of sorrow, and fixing our mind on the Paramātmā, who is Love-incarnate, love Him from the core of our heart. The very day our Love takes the form of a ceaseless stream, we shall realize God. If, therefore, the reader believes in the truth of what has been stated above, if he has the fullest confidence that through the scrupulous pursuit of the discipline for God-realization he must succeed in realizing God, then with a sincere heart he should withdraw his mind from the objects of enjoyment of the world, which are transitory and painful in essence, and which appear pleasant only through ignorance, and devote it to God, who is absolute existence, pure consciousness, and infinite bliss, with exclusive and whole-hearted love, which is the principal means of realizing Him.



The Best Discipline for God-realization

It is a matter for great delight to me that through the supreme grace of the all-merciful Lord I have been afforded this splendid opportunity to place before my readers a few humble thoughts on the glory of the Divine Name. Truly speaking, the value of the 'Name' can be appraised by him alone whose mind remains constantly attached to it, who sheds tears of joy and feels a thrilling sensation from time to time through the sweet and loving memory of the 'Name', who cannot bear even a moment's separation from the 'Name' and feels uneasy without it like a fish out of water, who cannot give up the 'Name' even for the twinkling of an eye and who has completely lost his identity in it through constant and loving repetition devoid of any selfish motive. Only such a blessed soul is fully qualified to describe the glory of the 'Name', and it is from his writing that the world may derive some benefit. As for myself, I am an ordinary man of the world without any capacity to describe the indescribable glory of the sacred Name which is productive of infinite spiritual good. I have launched myself into this attempt only under pressure from certain friends. I, therefore, crave the indulgence of my kind readers for the numerous shortcomings that will be noticed in this bold attempt of mine.

The Glory of the Name

The glory of the Divine Name is infinite. This glory extends over all the Yugas. Our sacred books as well as saints and sages have by consensus of opinion recognized

its value and commended it unreservedly for all sages; but for the present age of Kali, they say, there is no other method equally efficacious for the attainment of salvation. Thus, the Purāṇas say:—

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलम् ।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥

“In the age of Kali the Name of Śrī Hari is the best means for attaining salvation. Except this there is no other method.”

कृते यद् ध्यायतो विष्णुं त्रेतायां यजतो मखैः ।
द्वापरे परिचर्यायां कलौ तद्धरिकीर्तनात् ॥

“The spiritual gain derived from meditation on Bhagavān Viṣṇu in Satyayuga, from performance of sacrifices in Tretā, from worship of God in Dwāpara, is attained in Kaliyuga through mere Kīrtana (loud chanting) of God’s Name.”

Says Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

“In Kaliyuga the Divine Name is the only resort;
Constantly remembering it, O mortals, cross this ocean of worldly existence.

There is no Yuga like the Kaliyuga, if one has faith in this statement:

Singing the stainless glories of Śrī Rāma one can cross the ocean of worldly existence.

Instal the Name of Śrī Rāma, which is like an effulgent gem, on the threshold of thy tongue,

If thou wouldst have thyself illumined.

Even those who have renounced all desires and are steeped in love of Śrī Rāma,

Have merged their hearts in the nectarean love of Divine Name.

Whereas the Lord of Raghus bestowed salvation on devoted servants like Śabarī (the Bhīl woman) and the vulture (Jaṭāyu),

The name rescued innumerable wretches: this virtue of the Name is revealed in the Vedas. He who seeks in abode of peace without remembering Śrī Rāma,

Though possessed of wisdom, he is no better than a quadruped without tail and horns. It may be possible to obtain Ghee by churning water, and oil may be extracted from sand,

But the ocean of worldly existence cannot be crossed except through remembrance of Śrī Hari: this conclusion cannot be set aside.

By fondly repeating the Name

The devotee easily becomes a veritable home of joy and blessedness.

Through muttering of Name, Prahlāda secured the blessing of the Almighty Lord

And became the crest-jewel of devotees.

Through remembrance of the sacred Name the son of wind-god (Hanumān)

Made Śrī Rāma a captive of his heart.

Ajāmila as well as the Lord of elephants and the harlot too,

All got salvation through the name of Śrī Hari

In all the four Yugas, in the past, present and future, as well as in all the three regions

Jīvas succeeded in overcoming grief through repetition of the Name.

How far shall I describe the glory of the Name.

When Rāma Himself is unable to recount its glory."

I can quote any number of texts in support of the glory of the Divine Name; our scriptures are full of them, but I refrain from quoting more lest the article may assume dimensions out of all proportion. Almost all the religious systems of the world recognize in one form or another the

glory of the Name of God and sing its praises. The names, of course, differ according to the taste and temperament of the votary. But being names of the same Paramātmā they all possess the same efficacy. Therefore, what one should do is to select a Name of his own choice and begin practising its Japa (muttering) with meditation side by side .

Personal Experiences

Some friends have pressed me to relate my own personal experiences in the matter. But what am I to write when I know that my output of Nāma-Japa has not been quantitatively large? I find it difficult even to describe in full the benefit I derived from what little practice of the Divine Name I could carry on through the grace of the Divine Lord.

I started the practice of muttering the Name even when I was a boy, as a result of which my attachment for objects of enjoyment gradually got attenuated and it proved a great help to me in guarding myself against sin. Passions like lust and anger gradually slackened their hold on me and peace dawned within my heart. Now and then as I closed my eyes I could meditate well on the Form of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra. Thoughts of the world subsided to a great extent. The attraction for objects of enjoyment disappeared and I developed a taste for a forest life or a life of seclusion.

As I was thus engaged in spiritual practice I saw in a dream, one day, Bhagavān Śrī Rāma accompanied by Śrī Sītā and Śrī Lakṣmaṇa and also had the privilege of conversing with them. Śrī Rāma pressed me hard for asking a boon, but I had no inclination to ask for anything; eventually, even when I was further pressed, I sought for no other boon except that I might never part from Him. All this happened through the power of the Name.

Subsequent to this I derived even greater benefit from

the practice of Nāma-Japa, but I find myself unable to describe its magnitude. I can, however, unhesitatingly say that except the study of the Bhagavadgītā no other discipline proved so efficacious for my spiritual growth as the practice of muttering the Divine Name.

Whenever I found myself confronted with any serious obstacle which threatened to divert me from the path of spiritual progress. I used to take recourse to Nāma-Japa with loving devotion along with meditation, and invariably I surmounted those obstacles through the practice. Therefore, it is my firm belief that there is no discipline which is equal to the loving practice of Nāma-Japa accompanied by meditation of the Form of the Lord for removal of obstacles on the path of spiritual advancement and for setting at rest the worldly impulses arising within the mind. When I was able to derive such a supreme peace, such an infinite joy and such incomparable benefit as I cannot adequately describe; through such a meagre output of Nāma-Japa, who can describe the extent of joy experienced by the blessed soul who is constantly engaged in this practice of Nāma-Japa and meditation in an altogether disinterested spirit?

An Apology for Nāma-Japa

The Śruti says:—

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥

“The syllable ‘OM’ is Brahma Itself, it is the supreme reality. Knowing this syllable ‘OM’ one may obtain whatever he desires.”

According to this declaration of Śruti, remembrance of God is a wish-yielding tree by recourse to which one can get whatever he desires. But true devotees who seek only spiritual welfare should practise remembrance of God in a

thoroughly disinterested spirit. It is such disinterested and sincere devotees who have been highly extolled in the scriptures. The Lord also says:—

“Four types of virtuous men worship Me, Arjuna—the seeker of worldly objects, the sufferer, the seeker for knowledge, and the man of wisdom. Of these the best is the man of wisdom, constantly established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me”¹ (Gītā VII. 16-17).

He who knows the power and efficacy of such disinterested, sincere and absorbing practice of the Name can never forget the Lord even for a moment and He, too, cannot forget such a devotee. The Lord Himself says:—

“He who sees Me (the Universal Self) present in all beings, and sees all beings existing in Me, I am never out of sight of him, nor is he ever out of sight of Me.”²

Can a true lover ever enthrone in his heart anyone else than the object of his love? Those blessed souls who knowing the glory of the all-blissful Divine, make Him the sole object of their love, remain absorbed day and night in the remembrance of His dear Name. They neither seek nor like any other object.

Until this stage is reached the following course of discipline may be adopted. While uttering the Name one should get so deeply absorbed in love that he may lose consciousness of the very existence of his body. Let him

1. चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥
तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥
2. यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

not solicit or even desire anything else than loving devotion of the purest type and the privilege of a Divine vision even in moments of the greatest trial. Let him not hanker for any worldly object.

The aspirant who practises Nāma-Japa disinterestedly, sincerely, and devotedly in the prescribed manner can achieve good results within a short time.

It may be urged here that a good many people are seen practising Nāma-Japa without any appreciable results. Our answer to this contention is that either those people did not possibly practise Nāma-Japa in the prescribed manner at all or they purchased some trifling worldly enjoyment in lieu of the supreme wealth of Nāma-Japa. Had it not been the case, they would have doubtless derived adequate spiritual benefit from their practice.

Therefore, Nāma-Japa should never be practised for the satisfaction of any worldly desire, be it great or small; it should be practised only for the attainment of unalloyed Love of God.

How to Practise Nāma-Japa?

Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

‘तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः।’

(Yoga-Sūtra 1.27)

“The indicator of Paramātmā, that is, His Name is Praṇava (OM).” Again,

‘तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्।’

(Ibid., 1.28)

“Japa of this Name should be practised along with the contemplation of Its meaning, i. e., meditation on the essence of God.”

‘ततः प्रत्यक्चेतनाधिगमोऽप्यन्तरायाभावश्च।’

(Ibid., 1.29)

“Through the aforesaid practice all obstacles are removed and God-realization takes place.”

This proves that the Japa of the Divine Name should be

practised simultaneously with meditation on the Divine Essence. The Japa when it is joined with meditation on the Divine Essence removes all obstacles and brings about realization of God. It is, of course, true that the possessor of the Name is under the influence of the Name. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

“The Form is observed as being subordinate to the Name,

Without the Name no knowledge of Form is possible.

When the Name is remembered without seeing the Form,

The latter manifests in the heart through excess of Love.”¹

Thus through Nāma-Japa alone without any effort to meditate on the Divine form, the aspirant can automatically obtain a vision of God when the time comes for it. But this is a tardy process. If the Japa is practised, simultaneously with meditation on the enchanting Form of the Lord, the result will be speedily obtained. For in constant meditation there is no break in the remembrance of God. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

“Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus surrendered to Me, you will doubtless come to Me.”²

According to the above injunction of the Lord, aspirants should constantly practise meditation on the Divine Essence with the mind and determine it with the intellect simultaneously with Nāma-Japa in all conditions and all postures of the

1. देखिअहिं रूप नाम आधीना । रूप ग्यान नहिं नाम बिहीना ॥

सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखें । आवत हृदयँ सनेह बिसेषें ॥

2. तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

body, and even while performing their ordinary worldly duties so that there may be no interruption in the remembrance of God even for a moment.

It may be asked here which Name of God possesses the greatest spiritual efficacy, and what Form of God should be meditated upon? Our answer to this question is that the aspirant derives the greatest benefit from the Japa of the Name which appeals to him the most and evokes his greatest reverence. He should, therefore, adopt the Name of his own choice for Japa and meditate on the Form which he likes best. Care should, of course, be taken that the Form to be meditated upon corresponds with the Name selected for Japa. Thus, for instance, one who selects the formula 'ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय'; (Obeisance to Lord Vāsudeva) for Japa should meditate on Vāsudeva, the all pervading Divinity. Similarly, those who select the formula 'ॐ नमो नारायणाय'; (Obeisance to Lord Nārāyaṇa) and 'ॐ नमः शिवाय'; (Obeisance to Lord Śiva) should meditate on the Forms of Bhagavān Viṣṇu and Lord Śaṅkara respectively. Even so, one who adopts the sacred syllable 'OM' for Japa should meditate on the all-pervading Absolute Reality which is a compact mass of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. Finally those who adopt the Name of Śrī Rāma for Japa will find it profitable to meditate on the Form of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra, son of King Daśaratha. As for those who adopt the formula:—

हे राम हे राम राम राम हे हे।

हे कृष्ण हे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हे हे॥

They may use for meditation the Divine Form of Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Viṣṇu or the all-pervading Brahma according to their individual taste and temperament inasmuch as the Name occurring in the formula represent all those Forms.

The above illustrations are intended to show that the

aspirant will derive greater benefit from the Japa and meditation of the Name and Form into which he has been initiated by his preceptor, nay, which commands his greatest reverence, love and faith, and which appeals to his soul. Of course, it is essential that Japa should be accompanied by meditation. In fact, the name should invariably awaken memory of the Possessor of the Name. Each time a person utters the name of a particular object, his memory of that object must be awakened by the mention of its name even for a while, thus producing a good or bad impression according to the nature of the object. For instance, the memory of incidents full of pathos or the heroic sentiment, will fill your mind with those sentiments. The memory of a noble and exalted soul will rouse noble sentiments, and the memory of wicked soul will rouse evil sentiments in your mind. When the remembrance of ordinary worldly things, possesses this potency, there is no wonder that the remembrance of God should rouse divine sentiments in your heart and bring divine attributes before your mind. Therefore, an aspirant should try to lose himself in the raptures of Divine Love and make special efforts to carry on constantly and disinterestedly amidst all his multifarious duties the Japa of the Divine Name accompanied by meditation.

How Satsaṅga Strengthens Faith in the Name

When the glory of the Divine Name is so great, how is it that people do not devote themselves heart and soul to the practice of the Divine Name and meditation? Our answer to this question is that the true value of remembrance of God can be assessed by him alone who fully enjoys the grace of God. It is no doubt true that His grace extends in an equal degree on all, but one cannot profit by it unless and until he recognizes its infinite greatness. One may have some treasure

hidden in an underground vault of his house, but unless the owner of the house knows where the vault is, he cannot make use of that wealth. When, however, he comes to know of its existence from some one who has knowledge of it, and unearths the treasure after some exertion, then only he can utilize that wealth. Even so, one discovers the eternal grace of God only through association with souls who possess a direct knowledge of His grace and its glory; through knowledge of the grace the true value of Bhajana (remembrance of God) is recognized, then one betakes himself to the practice of Bhajana and through constant and uninterrupted practice of Bhajana all the accumulated sins are washed away root and branch and one attains the *summum bonum* of his life in the shape of God-realization.

The Inherent Potency of Name to Destroy Sins

Here it may be urged that if God destroys or forgives the sins of those who practise His Bhajana, He thereby exposes Himself of the charge of partiality. Our answer to this contention is that just as fire possesses the inherent property of ignition and illumination even so the Divine Name possesses the inherent power of destroying sins. It is, therefore, that the Lord says in the Gītā:—

“I am equally present in all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me. They, however, who devoutly worship Me abide in Me, and I also stand revealed in them.”*

This clearly shows that God is never partial. Of numerous people oppressed by cold, fire protects from cold and relieves the suffering of those alone who approach the fire

* समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

and expose their bodies to it, while those who do not approach it are not relieved of their suffering. This does not expose fire to the charge of partiality because it is always prepared to relieve the suffering of anyone who approaches it, by transmitting its heat to him. If anyone does not approach it at all, the fire is not to blame for it. Similarly, God purifies the heart and relieves the suffering of all who engage themselves in the pursuit of His Bhajana and blesses them. Therefore no blame of partiality can attach to God.

Practice of the Name Itself Brings Enlightenment

Question—Granted that the Divine Name destroys our sins, but how can it help in the realization of the Supreme State, because that state is attained only through Knowledge?

Answer—True, the Supreme State is realized only through Knowledge. But if the Divine Name is practised disinterestedly with reverence, love and faith, God vouchsafes that divine knowledge to the devotee which enables the latter to realize the truth about Him, and through realization of that truth he undoubtedly attains the Supreme State. The Lord Himself says:—

“With their mind fixed on Me, with their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, they ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they attain Me.

In order to shower My grace on them, I, dwelling in their

* मच्चित्ता मदगतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम्।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते॥

heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom"* (Gītā X 9—11).

Therefore, constant, disinterested and loving practice of Nāma-Japa together with meditation on the Divine Essence automatically gives rise to Divine Knowledge and through that Knowledge the aspirant immediately attains the Supreme State.

The Name Should Never Be Lightly Treated

There are some friends who having no idea of the importance of Nāma-Japa, light-heartedly proceed to speak of it in disparaging terms. They say the practice of the Name is no better than the mechanical muttering of a meaningless sound. They further allege that to indulge in this hypocritical practice is to idle away one's time and waste one's life, and so on.

I would request such friends to desist from this harmful attempt to unsettle the minds of those who believe in the efficacy of the Name and practise it, by speaking lightly of the practice without proper investigation. Nay, I would invite them to practise the Japa for some time and see for themselves what the Name can do. It is no use incurring sin by speaking disparagingly of the Divine Name or treating it lightly.

Lapse in Nāma-Japa through Negligence or Sloth is Inadvisable

There are many people who recognize the utility of Nāma-Japa or remembrance of God, but fail to adopt it through negligence or sloth. This is, however, a great mistake on their part. What shall we say of those who

* तेषामेवानुकम्प्यार्थमहमज्ञानजं

तमः ।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो

ज्ञानदीपेन

भास्वता ॥

having secured this invaluable yet perishable gift of a human body are slack in practising Bhajana (remembrance of God)? The utility of this life lies in adhering to the Name. If we throw away this rare opportunity through our own carelessness, we shall reap nothing but repentance hereafter.

The great saint Kabīra says:—

“You are sure to die one day, when your very Name will be forgotten.

Leaving this populous village, you will go to inhabit a desolate wilderness instead,

Today or tomorrow, or a few days later, you will have to take up your abode in a dreary forest;

And your remains will be run over by the ploughshare and overgrown with verdure which will serve as food for the cattle,

Today you say you will remember God tomorrow, and tomorrow you postpone it for the next day.

Thus putting it off from day to day, you will spend your whole life.

If you propose to start your practice of remembering God tomorrow, start it this very day; and if you propose to start the practice today, do it this very instant.

If Death overtakes you the very next moment, when will you do it?’

Therefore, avoiding carelessness and sloth, one should form the habit of practising Bhajana in any case, at every time, and in every condition, even while attending to one’s legitimate duties.

The mother places toys of different kinds before the child in order to divert its attention, and also gives it some eatables. The child that leaves weeping through attraction for those things is left alone by the mother, who thus finds time to attend to other duties. But the child who refuses to

be tempted by these things and goes on crying for the mother compels her to come and take it up in her arms. The mother has to leave all her household duties in order to appease and fondle such a refractory child, because she knows that the child seeks nothing else than her loving arms and cannot be beguiled by anything else.

Similarly, God also tries to beguile the devotee by placing before him allurements of various kinds of his own liking, just in order to test his devotion. One who falls an easy prey to such allurements fails in the test. But for the fortunate devotee who spurns all objects of the world, knowing them to be quite insignificant, transient and perishable, and goes on continually and sincerely crying for the loving embrace of the Divine Mother, who is All-Truth, All-Consciousness and All-Bliss, the latter has to leave all other work and present Herself before him without delay. Saint Kabīra says:—

“Call out only ‘Keśava, Keśava’; do not indulge in meaningless jargon;

Calling Him day and night, you will certainly make yourself heard some day,

Go on repeating the Name of Rāma till there is life in your body;

The humming of your voice will surely reach the ears of the compassionate Lord one day.”

It is, therefore, our paramount duty to withdraw our mind from all objects of the world, knowing them to be a curse in the garb of blessing, and engage ourselves in the Japa of the sacred Name of the Paramātmā. One who practises the Japa of the Divine Name is soon liberated by the merciful Lord from the bondage of birth and death.

Here it may be urged that God is only just inasmuch as He destroys the sins of, and grants salvation to those alone

who remember Him. Why, then, should He be called merciful?

The above contention does not stand the test of reason. Whereas earthly sovereigns gratify those who serve them by offering worldly possessions to them, such is not the case with God. The practice with Him is to reciprocate the feelings with which the worshipper approaches Him:—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।

“Arjuna, howsoever men approach Me, even so do I seek them.”

God does not make any distinction between the high and the low. He meets the humblest creature exactly in the manner the latter approaches Him, and fully responds to his sentiments. If anyone weeps for Him and gets impatient to meet Him, He too gets equally impatient to see him. Is this not an indication of His boundless mercy?

Therefore, renouncing all the illusory enjoyments of the transient and perishable world, one should constantly engage himself in the disinterested and loving practice of muttering the sacred Name of the Almighty Lord, who is the very embodiment of justice, purity, compassion and love, together with contemplation on His Divine Essence.

Nāma-Japa is the sovereign remedy for all worldly ills and the best means of God-realization.



A Caution and a Warning

The scriptures and saints have been and are admonishing us by beat of drum, yet the wonder of it is that we do not open our eyes. The human body, being the best of all bodies and conducive to salvation, has been recognized as a rare boon. Birth as a human being among the numberless species of earthly beings, the land of Bhāratavarṣa (India) among all lands, and the Sanātana Vedic Religion among all religions have been regarded as the best. No species superior to the human species is found anywhere on this globe. The land of Bhāratavarṣa is the fountain-head from which spiritual knowledge has flowed into the whole world. That is to say, most of the great world teachers of religion derived their knowledge of the spirit from India. Besides, the religion of the Vedas is beginningless and eternal, all other religions and creeds came into existence after it and are more or less based on it. Votaries of other faiths though not recognizing it as without a beginning, admit it to be the earliest of all religions. Thus the superiority of these three is proved even by Logic. Those who are born as human beings in such a country, and under the influence of such a religion, and yet do not wake up to their responsibility, will have greatly to repent for their error.

“They will suffer in the next world and rue their mistake. And will falsely blame Time (the Kali Age) and the inexorable Law of Karma and God, (who operates the Law) for their suffering.” *

—Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa

* सो परत्र दुख पावइ सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाइ ॥

But it will be a mistake on their part to blame anyone else for what has been brought about by their own negligence; for though this age of Kali is the repository of all evils, it is very helpful in bringing about salvation.

Śrī Śukadeva says:—

“O king, though Kali is the repository of all evils, it has one great virtue, viz., that in this age through mere chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s Name and glories one is freed from the bondage of worldly attachments and attains the Paramātmā.”¹
(Bhāgavata XII. iii 51)

Thus, man can attain the supreme state through mere chanting of the glories of God, Prārabdha (Destiny), too, cannot stand in the way of our pursuing a course of discipline for the emancipation of the soul. It is, therefore, no use blaming Prārabdha in this connection, and as for God there is no limit to His mercy.

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa says:—

“The immortal Jīva appearing on earth migrates from one womb to another among the eighty-four lacs of species, under the influence of Māyā caught in the whirligig of Time, Swabhāva (Nature) and Guṇas (traits); God, whose love is unmotivated, out of compassion gives him occasionally the privilege of human body.”²

Is it not foolishness to blame God even under such circumstances? If we were born as monkeys to work out our Karma, we would have moved among trees leaping from one branch to another; if born as birds we would have fluttered in the forest, if born as pigs or puppies, we would have dragged

1. कलेर्दोषनिधे राजन्नस्ति ह्येको महान् गुणः ।

कीर्तनादेव कृष्णस्य मुक्तसंगः परं व्रजेत् ॥

2. आकर चारि लच्छ चौरासी । जोनि भ्रमत यह जिव अबिनासी ॥

फिरत सदा माया कर प्रेरा । काल कर्म सुभाव गुन घेरा ॥

कबहुँक करि करुना नर देही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥

our miserable existence on the outskirts of towns or villages. What more could we do in that condition? Let the reader judge for himself the magnitude of God's compassion. He has given us a rare opportunity by blessing us with this human body. This opportunity should never be lost by us. Such an opportunity must have been given us many a time before, but we did not avail it then, and once more it has been vouchsafed to us. We should make a very prudential use of it this time, realizing that great, pious Emperors like Māndhātā and Yudhiṣṭhira, mighty long-lived Asura like Hiraṇyakaśipu, Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna, regional gods like Varuṇa (god of water), Kubera (god of wealth) and Yama (god of Death) himself and even lords of celestial beings like Indra have appeared and disappeared many a time leaving their bodies and glories, and could not carry even an empty shell with them. We should, therefore, consider how much more ephemeral is the relation of us, short-lived human beings, with this earthly body, wealth, family and glory.

Under such circumstances is it not wonderful that like one intoxicated by a drink of strong wine, we forget all these things and waste our valuable life in pursuit of transient earthly enjoyments, which are, in fact, the root of all misery, or in amassing wealth, which procures these enjoyments, nourishing the body and maintaining our family? We had no relation with these objects of enjoyment before, nor will this relation be maintained hereafter. How is it, then, that we have come to regard the accumulation of these objects as the summum bonum of our life? Life is short, death is lying in wait for us; suddenly without any notice it will pounce upon us and seize us. While there is life in the body, while it does not show signs of decay and while we can exercise control over it, we should do all we can, to achieve the object for which we have come into this world. The royal sage Bhartṛhari says:—

“A wise man should make the best efforts for his salvation while his body is in sound health, while old age is still at a distance, while the senses are unimpaired and while not much of his life has been wasted. What is the good of attempting to dig a well when the house is already on fire?” 1

Therefore, says Kabīra:—

“If you propose to remember God tomorrow begin it this very day;

And if you propose to start the practice today, do it this very instant,

Dissolution will overtake thee in a moment; When will thou do it again?” 2

This is our paramount duty which has remained undischarged to this day. Had this been performed before, we would not have found ourselves in the present deplorable condition. There is not a single species of life which we have not passed through at one stage or other of our beginningless existence. We have enjoyed the pleasures of all lives from the lowest species, such as the ant, to the highest class of beings such as Indra, the lord of heaven; yet we have not reached the end of our journey, because we have not gone through the necessary spiritual discipline and shall continue to wander to unless and until we strive for our spiritual welfare in right earnest. Thousands and lacs of Brahmās have come and gone, crores of Indras have occupied and vacated paradise one after another, and we, too, have undergone countless births; the particles of dust may be counted but not the number of our

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1. यावत्स्वस्थमिदं कलेवरगृहं यावच्च दूरे जरा
यावच्चेन्द्रियशक्तिरप्रतिहता यावत्क्षयो नायुषः ।
आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विदुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्
प्रोद्दीप्ते भवने तु कूपखननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः ॥
 2. काल भजंता आज भज, आज भजंता अब ।
पलमें परले होयगी, बहुरि भजैगा कब ॥

births. Lacs and crores of Kalpas (life-time of a Brahma) may roll on yet and still God cannot be realized without undergoing necessary spiritual discipline (साधना); and without realizing God there will be no end to our peregrination. It is, therefore, essential that we should make it a point to practise constant remembrance of the Name and real nature of the Paramātmā and carry out His commandments. This is the shortest and easiest way to God-realization (Gītā VIII. 14; XII. 6-7). In order to be able to carry on this practice successfully one should seek the shelter and guidance of exalted souls who have attained true happiness. Through the contact, service and grace of such great souls alone, one is enabled to attain God by cultivating supreme reverence and exclusive Love through a knowledge of His virtues and glory. The grace of such exalted souls, again, falls on those who enjoy the grace of God. For, as Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa puts it:—

“He alone who enjoys the grace of Śrī Rāma receives favour and kindness from all.”*

It is through the grace of God alone that one gets the opportunity of coming in contact with and serving a great soul. Although each of us enjoys the infinite grace of God equally, we do not recognize this fact due to our ignorance and are lost in the enjoyments of the world. That is why we fail to derive full benefit from that grace. Even though the philosopher’s stone may be lying in a poor man’s hut, he suffers all the pangs of poverty because he is ignorant of the virtues, efficacy and secret of that stone. Similarly, we lead a life of sorrow because of our ignorance of God and His mystery, glory, real nature and virtues.

For acquiring knowledge of these we should associate with and serve great soul, study books dealing with the Name, Form, glories and stories of the Lord, chant the same

* जापर कृपा राम कै होई । तापर कृपा करइ सब कोई ॥

and dwell thereon in our mind. When we know the virtues and efficacy of a thing, we develop reverence and love for it, and the knowledge of its imperfections leads us to conceive hatred for it. This is a general law. And it is well-known fact that there is none equal to God either in virtue or in glory—God whose very thought has brought forth this universe, the mere winking of whose eyes means the creation and dissolution of the world, who is powerful enough to raise within the twinkling of an eye, a creature as insignificant as a fly to the position of Indra himself, and likewise to reduce a great being like Indra to the position of a fly—nay, who has the power to bring the impossible into the region of possibility and to render impossible what is ordinarily possible: in fact, there is nothing which is beyond the scope of His power. Although He is so great, He does not ignore those who worship Him; on the contrary, He begins to worship the worshipper Himself with the same degree of devotion and love. One who has come to know this secret even partially, how can he bear His separation even for a moment?

When sought by the humble, the distressed, the helpless or even the worst sinner, God does not take account of their vices or evil conduct but hugs them to His bosom like a loving mother. Can the person who comes to know the secret of this compassionate nature of the Supreme Puruṣa, who is supremely kind and the true friend of all, make any delay in raising a cry of distress for his own purification?

The virtues of forbearance, forgiveness, compassion, self-abnegation, serenity, love, wisdom, equanimity, fearlessness, affection, artlessness, tenderness, sweetness, friendliness, etc., are present in the Paramātmā in an infinite measure, and they are naturally imbibed by devotees who

worship Him. One who knows this secret, cannot for a moment worship any object other than the Paramātmā.

How can it be possible for a person who has known in the truth about God to transgress any injunction of God, the embodiment of love, humility and compassion, who knows the secret of love, nay, who is Love Personified, who though immeasurably great, follows His loving devotees and companions as a shadow?

Let alone him who has come to know His virtues and power, even one who has faith in the existence of such a virtuous and powerful Lord can never commit any sin; on the contrary, the thought of His virtues and power will, as a matter of course, infuse fearlessness, cheerfulness and tranquillity into his heart. At every step he receives support and protection from the Lord, which goes to accelerate his progress in Sādhana and replenish the store of his vigour and zeal and this finally leads him to realization of God.

Even if this faith cannot be developed, one should not forget God even for a moment, as otherwise one may have to face a great calamity. For the scriptures as well as saints declare, and this is also supported by reason, that man attains whatever objects he meditates on at the time of his departure from this world. Whatever object man meditates on while going to sleep, he generally visualizes as a dream at night. Similarly, whatever he meditates on at the time of death, he attains in after life. If he meditates on God, he will attain God, if he meditates on the earthly objects of enjoyment, he will come back to earth. Should anyone imagine that he would fix his mind on God at the time of final parting, it would be a great mistake on his part to do so. At the time of death, one's senses and mind get weak and exhausted, and it is the old habit that generally asserts itself. Therefore, being blessed with a human birth, we should not take the

risk of deferring the contemplation of God to the last moment, that is to say, even if one finds himself unable to pursue any other discipline, he should at least form the habit of constant remembrance of God, His virtues and powers. No expense or labour is involved in this practice; on the contrary, it brings immediate joy and peace, and is very easy to perform. The only thing required, is faith. The rest will be accomplished as a matter of course. To cultivate this faith in God, one should hear from the lips of saints and other great souls, discourses on the Name, form, virtues, glory, love and sports of the Lord and dwell on the same in the mind. By doing so; one can develop faith in and supreme Love for God and thus attain Him easily through the grace of the saints and God Himself. But alas! for want of faith in God and the other world we have shut our eyes to the fact and instead of utilizing our precious life to the best advantage, viz., for attaining salvation, we waste it in enjoying the transient and ephemeral pleasures of the world. The momentary pleasure that we seem to derive from worldly objects is not true happiness, it is a deception. This can be realized by even a slight exercise of thought. God has endowed us with intellect and wisdom in order that we may make a prudent use of our time. Therefore, one who recklessly wastes his life gives only an indication of his ignorance. Who am I? What is the nature of this world? In what relation do I stand with this world? What use do I make of my time? What is my proper duty? These are questions which everyone of us should carefully consider.

All living creatures of this world seek happiness — happiness that is uninterrupted and unbounded, and no one desires that he should have the least amount of suffering at any time. But this does not happen. What generally happens, is just the opposite of what one seeks. The reason is that

due to ignorance and short-sightedness, one does not make the best use of his time. Even those who are considered highly learned and wise in this world, regard worldly or material happiness as true happiness and madly pursue it out of infatuation. They hold true advancement to consist in the attempt to secure such happiness. According to many, accumulation of wealth which is a means of procuring worldly enjoyments, beings the highest object of life, forms the creation of advancement; while there are others who regard honour, prestige and fame to be the measure of success in life. But all this is nothing but foolishness, for these beings transient themselves, the pleasure derived through them is also nothing but transient. And because it is transient, the authors of the scriptures, the Ṛṣis, have called it unreal. This is the view held by the scriptures and saints and it is also supported by reason. Whatever is real can never perish. However much the forces of death may contend against it, it will ever remain unshakable as a rock. And that which is unreal, can never endure, however much you may try to preserve it. Realizing all this, we should withdraw our mind, senses and intellect from the pursuit of transient, momentary pleasures of this world and employ them all in the attempt to attain true happiness. To advance in the path leading to that happiness, is the mark of true progress or success in life.

Now, let us consider what is true happiness, and where it may be found. Also what is false happiness, and where does it lie. The only eternal, imperishable object in creation is the All-powerful Paramātmā who is compact mass of Consciousness and Bliss; therefore, happiness derived in relation to Him, is the true and eternal happiness. Worldly objects being themselves transitory and evanescent, pleasure that is derived through them is also transient and momentary.

Now, let us consider how these objects and the pleasure through them are transient and ephemeral. Take the instance of cow's milk. When it is freshly milked in the morning, its taste, appearance and quality are quite different; if however, it is held over till the evening all these things change; it does not retain the taste and quality possessed by it in the morning; even its appearance is changed, it gets a bit thicker. On the second or third day, it assumes a different character altogether, not only flavours, properties and appearance are completely changed, it acquires a different name as well. The milk is automatically transformed into curd, its sweetness turns into sourness; instead of being an antidote against flatulence and biliousness, it becomes favourable to their growth; from a flowing liquid it is changed into a thick mass. If it is kept over for ten days more, it will turn into a poison, highly injurious to health. Now even nectar-like substance like milk, being of a transitory character, loses its flavour, virtues, appearance and name even though it is kept thoroughly undisturbed. Had it been an eternal substance, it would not have undergone any change or decay. The same test may be applied in determining the nature of other objects. The happiness that appears to inhere in these worldly objects, is not true happiness. If the momentary flash of happiness appearing therein, is treated as happiness, the suffering with which they are attended, is even more pronounced; therefore, they should be rejected. Similarly, sexual enjoyment gives momentary pleasure, but a person who gets addicted to it will lose his health, strength, mental powers, energy and longevity and leading a miserable existence, will soon find himself within the jaws of death. And if it is indulged in contrary to injunction of the scriptures, it will bring him a bad name in this world and tortures of hell hereafter.

Therefore, let us consider how much suffering, and for what length of time, one has to go through, in exchange for this momentary gratification. The same is true of other forms of sensual enjoyment inasmuch as all enjoyments weaken the senses and body, and make the heart impure, and the mind weak and unsteady; they lead to the exhaustion of religious merits earned in previous births and aggravation of sin. Not only this, they make even self-possessed and valiant souls self-indulgent and voluptuous and render them incapable of treading the path of God-realization. Even if any of them attempts to tread this path, he does not attain speedy results.

Therefore, it is a mistake to amass wealth with a view to enjoy the pleasures of the world, because, in the first place, acquisition of wealth involves a good deal of trouble and exertion. Not only that, it also involves the perpetration of a good many sins or undesirable acts which may require expiation in hell. Once it is amassed, its protection becomes a problem. Occasions arise when people have to risk their very life for its protection. No small trouble has to be faced even in its expenditure or in giving it away as alms. There is a popular saying to the effect that giving away wealth is as good as death. Its loss is attended with terrible suffering and sorrow. When one is forced to leave all his possessions behind and pass to the next world, his grief and sorrow know no bounds. Therefore, is it anything but foolishness to face all this terrible suffering for the sake of a momentary pleasure? Again, the pleasures of senses he seeks to obtain from his wealth, he cannot enjoy just as he pleases. The greatest men of the world who possessed great worldly wisdom and practical knowledge had to leave this wealth and depart with great repentance and sorrow. Even those who

were endowed with great physical prowess and wielded immense power and influence could not carry their wealth with them, not to speak of puny mortals like ourselves. It is also not infrequently found that a certain individual amasses wealth and another enjoys it and spends it occasionally in a manner quite contrary to the wishes or expectations of the original possessor. Their case is analogous to that of the bee which gathers honey for the enjoyment of others and thus exhibits its rank folly. A bee is after all an ordinary insect not endowed with reason; but a human being, who fails to take this aspect into consideration, is even more foolish than the bee.

One earns a thousand rupees a day; but he is not satisfied with this amount and seeks to double his income. Suppose he is going to die tomorrow, and it is clear that after his death he will have no connection with his wealth. It is equally evident that death when it comes; comes quite unexpectedly and without any notice, and when it comes there is no escape for him even if he spends all his fortune and makes superhuman efforts to save himself. Death is inevitable for all. Such being human life, where is the exaggeration if people who are educated and have high-sounding titles prefixed or suffixed to their names, but whose only aim in life is accumulation of more and more wealth, are dubbed as more ignorant and foolish than the bee who gathers honey for the consumption of others?

Nor can those who apply their mind, body and wealth to the sole purpose of achieving fame, be credited with wisdom; for fame and reputation constitute a hindrance to the attainment of true happiness, and we retain no connection with that fame after our departure from this world. Therefore, it is our humble submission to those who possess a

superabundance of wealth and honour and whose minds are attached to objects of the world that are apart from God and Religion (Dharma) which consists in obeying God's commandments, they have no true friend and guide in this world or the next. Therefore, even if they seek fame, their efforts should be solely directed towards God-realization; for when they attain identification with Brahma, or in other words, become one with the Paramātmā; then all the glory of Brahma sung in the Vedas and other scriptures and all the reputation and fame attaching to the names of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will belong to them. Not only this, all the fame that hangs as a canopy round this universe or will be woven about it, in future, in fact, belongs to them. For he who attains Brahmahood becomes one with the Self of all. That is how the reputation of all, becomes his reputation. And this reputation of all, again, is contained within a small fraction of his Self. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥

(X. 41)

“Every such creature as is glorious, brilliant or powerful, know that to be a manifestation of a spark of My effulgence.”

This should make us realize how foolish it is to hanker after worldly fame, which is so trivial and insignificant, and waste our physical and mental energies and material wealth for its acquisition. In fact, realization of God, has not to be attained with a view to acquiring fame, it should be our supreme goal and chief support; for on realizing God nothing remains to be achieved or realized. This is what they call Mukti (Liberation), the supreme state, or true and abiding happiness. Just as the fire-fly or a drop of water cannot be compared to the sun or the ocean,

even so the accumulated happiness of the entire world cannot be compared to the joy of attainment of that compact mass of consciousness and bliss. The Lord says in the Gītā:—

यावानर्थं उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।
तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

(II. 46)

“A Brāhmaṇa who has obtained enlightenment, has the same use for all the Vedas as one has for a small reservoir of water in a place flooded with water on all sides.”

Just as the pleasure of sovereignty over the three worlds enjoyed in a dream, cannot be compared to the most trifling pleasure of the waking state; if this sovereignty of the dream-state is offered for sale it will not fetch even a single farthing inasmuch as the entire suzerainty disappears as soon as the waking state is reached, even so on the attainment of the Paramātmā, the whole world before us and the enjoyments we derive therefrom will disappear like a magic. Therefore, can there be anything more short-sighted, more foolish than to waste one's energy over the attainment of the momentary, false and evanescent pleasures of the world, ignoring the eternal, infinite joy of God-realization?

Even more wondrous is the state of the devotee who worships God with the ecstasy and fulness of Love, keeping his identity separate from God. He seeks pleasure in the pleasure of the Lord, finds happiness in the happiness of the Lord. All his movements are directed towards the attainment of exclusive Love for and eternal union with the Lord and winning His pleasure. Consecrating his all, body, mind and wealth, nay, his very self, to his beloved Lord, he gets enraptured with excess of Love and joy. God alone is his sole refuge, his wealth, his life, his very soul. That is why

such a devotee cannot bear His separation even for a moment. He constantly lives, moves, and has his being in his Beloved and delights in hearing, dwelling on and chanting His Name and the glories of His form, love, power and His secret sports.

He gets so much absorbed in the ecstasy of this joy, that he cares not even for the supreme state, or the Bliss of emancipation described above as attainable through identification with Brahma. Just as fish cannot bear separation from water even so separation from God becomes extremely unbearable to the devotee. Not only this, when God appears and clasps the devotee to His bosom, even the intervening clothes appear as a hindrance. He longs for eternal union without any intervening object, and will not like to be separated from him even for a moment. The glory of the devotee who is absorbed in this joy of God-realization, cannot be described in words even by great gods like Śeṣa (the Serpent-god), Maheśa (Lord Śiva) and Gaṇeśa (the god of wisdom), not to speak of ordinary mortals. God Himself, whose greatness and glory is sung by the seers and sages and saints of all times and climes and in all the Vedas, sings the glory of such a devotee and becomes a bonds slave of his Love. He has to reveal His identity to him according to the conception he has of Him in his mind and engage in sportive and ecstatic dalliance with him; that is to say, He begins to do whatever may please the heart of the devotee.

If it is asked, what is the difference between these two forms of God-realization, that in which the devotee maintains his separate identity and that in which he merges his identity in God, the answer is that the Sādhaka following the latter path is himself transformed into true bliss or becomes one with the Paramātmā, who is a compact mass of consciousness and bliss, and the devotee who worships God through

preservation duality, enjoys the divine bliss emanating from the blissful form of God, the Lord of all Rasas (shades of bliss), that is to say, he enjoys the blissful contact of Personal God.

Speech or words can describe the experience up to this stage. Subsequent to this, the devotees of both the paths, attain the final state which is something indescribable and which even the Vedas and other Śāstras, Devas and Ṛṣis like Śiva, Śārādā (Goddess of Learning) and Sanaka and the saints and sages who have attained that state, find themselves utterly incapable of describing. Whatever is given out in the form of hints to indicate, that state falls too short of it. For words cannot describe the experience of that region, the portals of which cannot be entered even by the mind and the intellect.

Therefore, all of us should make the most persistent and determined effort to attain true happiness in the form of God-realization, spurning the evanescent, momentary and insignificant pleasures of the world which are nothing but roots of sorrow and hindrances in the path of God-realization. Through the grace of God Himself, His realization becomes easy for a devotee who undertakes to make a sincere effort on these lines.



Divine Grace

A friend has asked me the following question: “Is the grace of God subject to certain conditions or absolutely unconditional? How should we learn to see the operation of grace under all circumstances?”

My first submission in this connection is that it is impossible to describe in full the glory and greatness of divine grace through human speech. The reason for this, is that this glory is infinite, whereas whatever is described through speech, is finite. Even the little that any sage or seer understands about the mystery of grace, he cannot express through words. There is, in fact, no limit to this grace, which is being constantly showered by God on all His creatures. Whatever guesses are made about the immensity of this grace, fall too short of what it actually is.

Grace, because it flows equally and spontaneously towards all beings without any external cause or condition, may on the one hand, be described as unconditional or causeless. On the other, it may be described as conditional, inasmuch as the more a person believes in it, and the greater the extent of grace one believes himself to be enjoying, and the more correctly and fully he grasps its true character, the more palpably and visibly he profits by it.

God is from every point of view complete by Himself without any desire of His own; He is all powerful, the Almighty Lord and Master of all. How can He be conceived to have any wish or desire, so that any interested motive may be attributed to His grace? He is by His very nature, and without any cause, extremely compassionate and supremely benevolent to all; all His actions are guided by the sole purpose of doing good to all; although a non-doer, it is out of sheer compassion

that He engages Himself in activities for universal good. Though not subject to birth, He incarnates Himself from time to time for the redemption of pious souls, for diffusing the light of religion, for the suppression of evil through the destruction of evil-doer* and for infusing love, and piety among the people through manifestation of His divine sports on earth. Though without attributes, formless and changeless, He has to take upon Himself a form and attributes in order to manifest Himself before His devotees, yielding to their Love. Though Lord of all, Almighty and thoroughly independent, He melts through love and makes Himself subservient to His devotees. His unmotivated, causeless supreme grace is the sole cause of all these phenomena.

Even those devotees or blessed souls who have attained God, who have realized the supreme glory of divine grace, who have themselves imbibed a share of that virtue, become altogether selfless; their relations with the world are no longer guided by self-interest. All their activities are solely guided by altruistic motives and do not have any selfish motive behind them. What wonder, then, if the divine grace is altogether unmotivated. That the relations of God-realized souls with other souls are no longer guided by self-interest, is admitted by the Lord Himself, who says in the Gītā:—

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

(III. 18)

“In this world that great soul has no use whatsoever for

* The Lord redeems the evil-doers even by killing them, as the scriptures say:—

लालने ताडने मातुर्नाकारुण्यं यथार्थके ।
तद्वदेव महेशस्य नियन्तुर्गुणदोषयोः ॥

“Just as the mother is inspired by compassion both indulging and roughly handling a child, even so the mighty Lord is actuated by compassion both in rewarding a virtue and punishing an offence.”

things done, nor for things not done; nor has he selfish dependence of any kind on any creature.”

Even so, with reference to His own self, the Lord says:—

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि॥

(Gītā III. 22)

“Arjuna, there is nothing in the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me; yet I continue to work.”

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa also says:—

“O Lord, in this wide world all friendship is tainted by selfishness, no one ever dreams of a higher aim in friendship. It is Thou and Thy servants (devotees) alone. O Chastiser of Demons, who are engaged in doing good to the world without any selfish motive.” *

The above description will show that though God and His devotees have no duty to perform, no interest to serve, they engage themselves in all forms of activities for the good of the people, that is, to guard them against sin and guide them along the noble path of morality, religion, and devotion to God. Their infinite grace or mercy is the only motive of their activities.

It may be asked here: If the divine grace extends equally on all in an infinite degree, how is it that all people do not attain salvation? A proper investigation into this question will show that people generally fail to take advantage of this grace because of their ignorance about its true nature.

Though God is Almighty and supremely kind, he does not perform any action on His own initiative because He is absolutely impartial and disinterested. His mercy is evoked

* स्वार्थ मित्र सकल जग माहीं। सपनेहुँ प्रभु परमारथ नाहीं॥
हेतु रहित जग जुग उपकारी। तुम्ह तुम्हार सेवक असुरारी॥

and he is moved to action only when a devotee approaches Him with faith and love. This may be illustrated by the example of the holy Ganges which is incessantly flowing to wash away sins and redeem the world, and yet those who are not acquainted with the infinite glory and sanctifying power of the Ganges, or who fail to take advantage of it by bathing in it or drinking its water for lack of faith and reverence, cannot derive much benefit from its presence. Even so divine grace is incessantly flowing everywhere in a current more extensive and more comprehensive than the Ganges, and yet people do not bestir themselves to take advantage of it by taking refuge at the feet of all-merciful Lord, due to their ignorance about the glory of His grace and a general lack of faith and reverence.

General benefit from the divine grace is derived by all beings in a uniform degree; but he who becomes a special object of His grace can derive benefit from it in a special degree. The light and rays of the sun are equally available to all at every place so that all derive equal benefit from it in a general way, but the rays of the sun are focussed in a special degree on a sun-stone which begins to emit fire as soon as the sun's rays fall on it. Similarly, he who possesses a heart as transparent and pure as the sun-stone, that is to say, who is possessed of reverence and love for God in a special degree, is able to derive special benefit from the divine grace.

All the three types of Karma of human beings, viz., Sañcita (accumulated actions of the past, which have yet to bear fruit), Prārabdha (those which have already begun to bear fruit), and Kriyamāṇa (actions that are being newly performed and added to the store of Sañcita Karma)—are closely connected with the divine grace. It is the divine grace which has been responsible for our past actions of a

meritorious types, and the divine dispensation according to which such actions are rewarded with enjoyments in the present life, also operates for the good of creatures and is inspired by His unbounded mercy. That is why those who have understood the secret of His grace, visualize its benign operation in every decree of Providence and in every condition. Virtuous actions in the present life are also attributable to his grace, it is his grace which guides us along the path of virtue. This divine grace is eternally associated with every form of Karma of human beings.

If things are scrutinizingly observed with the eye of reverence and faith every man can visualize the operation of the divine grace at every step and every moment of his life and under all circumstances. All the creatures of this world derive their subsistence and joy from elements like water, air, light, etc., their very life is sustained by them. The divine grace permeates through all these elements in a uniform degree.

The divine dispensation which regulates enjoyment and suffering according to virtuous and sinful deeds committed in the past is also inspired by His grace.

The Divine Law according to which accumulated sins of innumerable births are expiated by even a little amount of practice of Japa, meditation and association with holy men, reveals nothing but the infinite grace of God.

His grace is, again, particularly manifested when He reveals Himself in a visible form before devotees who take refuge in Him, and a loving and piteous appeal for such manifestation removes their suffering and distress, protects in everyway those who seek shelter under Him and guards them against sin. It is singularly and exceptionally kind of Him to reveal Himself on His own initiative, unasked and unsolicited, before a devotee who is firmly-rooted in devotion

like Prahlāda just in order to bless him with His auspicious sight and protect him from all danger.

His grace is also particularly revealed in weaning people from the path of sin and putting them on the right track through the agency of holy men and sacred books, or through promptings of their hearts or even by incarnating Himself on earth.

Man should learn to visualize the operation of His grace under all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, namely, in the possession or loss of objects of worldly enjoyment such as wife, children, wealth or lodging; in the enjoyment of good health or in failing health; in adversity and sorrow as well as in prosperity and abundance.

When there is abundance of objects of enjoyment one should cultivate the feeling that God has bestowed these objects on him as a reward for meritorious acts done in the past, so as to enable him to administer to the comforts of others, to perform more acts of virtue, to develop love for God and to employ them in the service of God. He alone has truly grasped the secret of divine grace who makes use of these objects for the bare maintenance of his body, and devotes all the rest to the service of God. He who utilizes them for personal enjoyment does not understand the truth about His grace.

When these objects of enjoyment are lost we should cultivate the feeling that they were hindrances in the path of devotion in so far as we looked upon them as objects of enjoyment and had developed attachment for them. It is therefore that the supremely merciful Lord has so kindly removed them all, in order to draw us towards Him, which is an act of supreme grace on His part. In this world we observed flies and other insects being attracted by flames; out of ignorance they rush into the flame and are reduced

to ashes. Seeing their sorry plight a tender-hearted person is moved by compassion and removes the flame out of their reach, or puts it out. The person removing the flame is actuated by supreme compassion for the flies, though the flies themselves do not realize it. To them he appears as most unkind, their sworn enemy. But this is nothing but ignorance and a mistake on their part. Similarly, there are simple-minded folk amongst us, who not knowing the secret of divine grace begin to imprecate God when they find themselves gradually losing their worldly possessions. But God is an Ocean of Mercy, He takes no notice of the impudence of such persons. He alone knows the true secret of grace; who sees the operation of grace even in the loss of worldly possessions and remains cheerful under all circumstances, knowing as he does that he has been deliberately deprived of these things by God in His supreme mercy, in order to expiate his past sins, and to guard against future sins, and in order to arouse in his mind a pronounced aversion for worldly enjoyments by revealing their transitory and ephemeral nature.

Even so when the body is in sound health, one should cultivate the feeling that the Lord is pleased to keep his body in sound health in order that he may be able to serve all creature seeing the presence of God in them and realizing His all-pervasiveness; that he may realize the truth and secret of God's greatness and glory through association with superior souls and that he may practise constant Bhajana (remembrance) and meditation on God. He who dedicates this ephemeral body to the service of the all-merciful Lord on the lines indicated above alone knows the true secret of divine grace.

When the body is in the grip of some malady, the feeling should be cultivated that the ailment has been sent by God

out of sheer compassion in order to enable him in reaping his past sins, to guard him against future commission of sins, to help him to cultivate an attitude of dispassion and indifference towards the body, to teach him how to make capital out of physical ailments by treating them as austerities and reaping the fruit thereof, and, lastly, to remind him of God every now and then. He alone knows the true secret of divine grace who cultivating this attitude does not sorrow over his illness and cheerfully engages his mind in the constant remembrance of God, and appreciating the benevolent intention of God, remains ever jubilant at heart.

In the same manner, one should see the operation of divine grace when he meets or is separated from an individual, happy or miserable, a saint or a sinner, or whenever any contact is established with any individual.

When he meets a superior soul, he should persuade himself to believe that the meeting has been arranged by supreme God in His infinite mercy so as to enable him to emulate His virtues and develop love for God by following His instructions.

When separated from him, he should believe that this separation has been brought about by God out of sheer compassion, in order to make him realize that constant association with such a soul is a rare privilege and further in order to arouse in him a strong desire to meet him again, and also to intensify his love for that exalted soul.

When thrown together with wicked and immoral persons he should believe that such a meeting has been arranged by God to help him to develop disgust for evil propensities and immoral practices by showing him the evils of such practices.

When separated from such persons he should believe that the separation has been brought about by God out of

sheer compassion for him in order to protect him from the evils of bad company.

When thrown in the company of unhappy men or creatures, he should believe that this has been ordained by God to help him to develop tenderness of heart and further to afford him an opportunity to serve those creatures, and develop otherworldliness.

When he meets such people or creatures, as are happy and contented, he should believe that this meeting has been kindly arranged by God in order that he may learn how to rejoice over the happiness of others.

When separated from these, he should cultivate the feeling that an opportunity has been afforded by God out of compassion for him to overcome his attachment for society and develop total indifference towards the world and to enable him to practise remembrance of God and meditation with assiduity in seclusion.

In this manner, one should learn to see the operation of divine grace through every incident at all times and under all circumstances. Through this practice one can derive special benefits by knowing and realizing how the infinite grace of God is eternally flowing through and enriching the life of every being.

The grace of the all-merciful divine on all beings is so great in its extent that it is impossible for man to comprehend it in its entirety; the maximum of grace that he can conceive himself to be enjoying, falls too short of the extent of grace he is actually enjoying. Man can never form a correct picture of the true nature of divine grace.

People describe God as an ocean of mercy, but careful consideration will show that this is not a correct description of God, it gives only a partial indication of His infinite grace. The ocean is a finite thing limited in space, whereas

divine grace is infinite and unlimited. People try to indicate this infinite character of grace through the metaphor of the ocean because there is nothing on this globe of ours which is larger in extent than the ocean.

Though the grace of God on all creatures is unlimited, people cannot derive much benefit from it because of their ignorance about its true character, and due to their own folly, remain constantly merged in sorrow.

The glory of grace is infinite; man can secure as much advantage through it as he may like to secure. So long as the truth and secret of this grace is not understood, it yields ordinary results in a general way; but the more it is understood, the more beneficent it proves; and the result is simply marvellous if we regulate our conduct according to our conception thereof.

The glory of divine grace is so great that when one comes to realize the truth about it, it helps him like the philosopher's stone to use it to its best advantages. For instance, the stone may be lying in a poor man's hut without his knowledge, he may be using it as an ordinary stone. Knowing it, as he does, to be an ordinary stone, he cannot derive much advantage from it, he can take only as much work from it as he would from an ordinary piece of stone. But if after being used for a long time as an ordinary stone, it accidentally comes in contact with a piece of iron, it shows its marvellous effect and secures much advantages to its owner. And if by seeing with his own eyes the miracle of the iron being transformed into gold or through admonition received from a person who knows its value, the poor man comes to know that it is no ordinary stone but a philosopher's stone, he realizes its true value and glory, and acting on that knowledge, derives the fullest advantage from it. Similarly when through some special incident or the contact of a

superior soul, man realizes to a certain extent the secret, truth and glory of divine grace, that knowledge itself incites him to act in a manner which makes him derive the fullest benefit from that grace.

He who comes to know the secret that God is supremely merciful and the dearest friend of all immediately attains final peace. The Lord Himself says:—

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति।

(Gītā VI. 29)

“Having known Me in reality as the selfless friend of all beings, My devotee attains peace.”

Why should he not attain it? We see it in our daily life that when we come to have a definite knowledge with regard to a merchant prince or a big landlord or ruler that the latter is kind-hearted and possesses some authority, that he is equally kind to all and that he knows us and desires to meet us and love us, how great is our joy, how much solace and comfort we derive, and how eagerly do we try to meet him and make the most of his acquaintance. What wonder, then, if he who comes to believe that God, who is the Almighty Ruler of countless millions of universes, is at the same time supremely kind and friendly to all, and is, in fact, anxious to love him, and willing to meet those who are anxious to meet Him, should try to make the best use of His grace and attain Supreme Peace. He who comes to know the secret of His grace, himself comes to possess an extremely tender heart and begins to love all.

He realizes God Himself and becomes the dearest object of His love; nay, he is united with God. The Lord Himself says:—

“For extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows

Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me.” *

(Gītā VII. 17)

“All these are noble, but the man of wisdom is verily My own self; this is My view. For this devotee, who has his mind and intellect merged in Me, is firmly established in Me, the highest goal,”*

(Gītā VII. 18)

Thus the infinite grace of that all-merciful, all-powerful and all-loving divine is naturally and constantly being showered on us all; we are profiting by it in a general way every moment of our life. He gave us an ocular demonstration of this grace when He came down on this earth with a seemingly human body. Considering these facts we should exert ourselves to the best of our ability to understand the secret, truth and glory of His grace. This human body has been vouchsafed to us as an expression of His unmotivated grace. It is in this body and this body alone that we can understand the inwardness of His grace and become an object of supreme love to God. Life is ebbing fast every moment, and it is impossible to get such an opportunity again. The time that has already passed will not return to us. This valuable human life should not be idled away and wantonly wasted in enjoying worldly pleasures, in hugging shadows and clasping illusions, and indulging in forbidden pursuits.



* उदाराः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम् ।
आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम् ॥

Delusion

Though without beginning, delusion has an end. Jñāna or saving knowledge is not something which has to be attained or striven for, for the soul (Ātmā) is the very embodiment of Jñāna. Efforts and exertion are necessary only for attaining something which is unrealized. In this case, however, we have only to dispel the ignorance through which we have assumed Brahma (the Eternal Principle), which is always with us, as something unrealized. Really speaking, this ignorance does not subsist in Brahma. It exists in him alone who looks upon this transitory world as something eternal. As a matter of fact, since there is no delusion with Brahma, it is equally preposterous to attempt to dispel it. But so long as the delusion exists it is necessary to get rid of it, and more so on the part of those who labour under this delusion. Delusion has existed since time without beginning in the eyes of those who recognize. It is alleged that a thing which has existed since time without beginning has no end. This is, however, not correct; for an error must cease; if there is an error, it must. If on the other hand, it is held that error is without an end, it would not be possible for any one attain knowledge. Hence it will have to be admitted that though delusion is without beginning, it must have an end. If it is held that the error has not existed since time without beginning, and came into existence of a later stage, three anomalies arise. In the first place, those who have attained (knowledge) will be liable to fall into error again. Secondly, it exposes God, the Creator of the universe, to blame, and thirdly, it keeps the door open for new creatures to come into existence. In this way delusion is proved to have an end, though

without a beginning. As a matter of fact, conception of time, too, exists within the four walls of Māyā (Illusion). Brahma is absolute and beyond time.

The Vedas, other scriptures and the enlightened souls also declare that there is nothing except Brahma, the Oversoul, consisting of pure intelligence. It does not lie in the mouth of anyone to say that the world is unreal, for such an assertion is not possible. To hold the world as unreal would be negating God, the Creator of the universe, the scriptures laying down what one should do and what one is forbidden to do, this and the other world, virtue and vice and so on. And to pronounce or hold these as meaningless is something beyond our competence. In that transcendental state where nothing but the Absolute exists, one gets tongue-tied. Speech functions only where there is ignorance and on that plane God, the Creator, the universe, the scriptures and everything is real and it behoves us all, so long as we are on this plane, to recognize all these as real and to act in accordance with the teachings of the scriptures. The delusion disappears as soon as the heart gets purified through the practice of virtuous deeds and motiveless devotion to God, and the aspirant attains his goal. This is what we call God-realization.



Dispassion

Value of Dispassion

Dispassion (Vairāgya) is highly essential for the seeker of final beatitude. The soul can be free only through Vairāgya. True Vairāgya gives rise to indifference towards worldly attachments or possessions and through this indifference alone one is able to meditate upon the essential form of the Divine. Real knowledge of the Divine follows in the wake of true meditation and knowledge is the gate to liberation. Mukti or final liberation from the bondage of births and deaths is impossible for them who do not realize the importance of Jñāna and non-attachment as essential steps to the absolution of the soul from metempsychosis. The knowledge which is bereft of dispassion and non-attachment is no knowledge, that is merely verbal knowledge or book-knowledge, which is the cause of bondage and never of liberation. The Śruti says:—

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायाऽस्ताः ॥

(Īsopaniṣad 9)

“They enter the dark region who have given themselves up to Ignorance; the darker region enter they who devote themselves to knowledge alone.”

Such verbal Jñānīs take a headlong plunge in sensual enjoyments. They do not take sin to be sin and hence it is that they fall into the clutches of Māyā and are lost forever. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa has well said regarding such people:—

“Without knowing the Real Self one who has relinquished

his legitimate duties—such a soul, says Tulasī, will straight go down to hell.”*

In fact, people are prone to embrace ignorance in the name of Jñāna. Hence an earnest seeker after true happiness should make it a point to acquire true and unshakable Vairāgya. Vairāgya does not consist in adopting a particular garb. To forsake one’s wife, children, family, wealth, etc., on any account, to put on clothes dyed in ochre, to remove the hair or to keep matted hair, and so on, which are supposed to be emblems of Vairāgya, do not constitute real Vairāgya. To put up a show of Vairāgya outwardly and to indulge in sensuous enjoyments mentally is what is called hypocrisy. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान् विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते॥

(Gītā III. 6)

“He who outwardly restraining the organs of sense and action, sits mentally dwelling on objects of senses, the man of deluded intellect is called a hypocrite.”

Hypocrisy is fast gaining ground today. There are people who take a rigid vow of silence simply with a view to deceiving others; others fix themselves up in a particular pose to serve their selfish ends; there are still others who besmear their bodies with ashes. Again, some grow long hair on their heads, while others are always found sitting by the fire—all this simply to fill their belly—‘उदरनिमित्तं बहुकृत वेशः’.

None of these external forms can be said to constitute Vairāgya. This should never be taken to mean that I discourage the practice of renouncing one’s wife and progeny, family, possession, sacred thread, bunch of hair on the head, etc., or bodily relinquishing one’s legitimate duties. Nor do I call the

* ब्रह्मज्ञान उपज्यो नहीं कर्म दिये छिटकाय।
तुलसी ऐसी आत्मा सहज नरक महँ जाय॥

vow of silence, adopting a particular pose, besmearing the body with ashes, growing long hair on the head or removing it altogether, as unscriptural or reproachable. Nor, again, do I suggest that all those who have left their hearths and homes and adopted these emblems are hypocrites. Nothing is farther from my intention than to revile or hold in contempt any person or class. I have in view those persons alone who put on appearances in the name of Vairāgya, simply with a view to eliciting homage from the masses and imposing upon them. Those sincere seekers of the divine light who take to external garbs mentioned above simply as an aid to self-control, and as a means of purifying the self and pushing their Sādhana, are by no means to be condemned or looked down upon. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, too, has characterized as hypocrites only those who put up a show of self-control but inwardly dwell upon sensuous objects. Those people who renounce sense-enjoyments mentally as well as bodily, in a spirit of true Vairāgya and with their mind fixed on the Lord, have been admired and eulogized in all the scriptures.

Vairāgya is really a great mystery and those alone who have acquired real dispassion know the secret of it. Vairāgya in its highest form is to be found only in those God-attained souls who are liberated even though endowed with a body—have dived deep into the ocean of divinity and have lost all relish for sense-enjoyments. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said in the Gītā:—

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

(II. 59)

“Sense-objects cease for him, who does not enjoy them with his senses; but the taste for them persists. This relish also, disappears in the case of the man of stable mind when he sees the Supreme.”

Let us now examine the true nature of Vairāgya, ways

to attain it, the distinguishing marks of those who are altogether free from attachment and the fruit of Vairāgya. For one who is practising Vairāgya can be classified under two heads; they have been called by the names of Vairāgya and unshakable Vairāgya (दृढ़ वैराग्य) in the Gītā, Vairāgya and ultimate Vairāgya (पर वैराग्य) in the “Yoga-Sūtras” and as Vairāgya and indifference (उपरति) in works on Vedānta. Although there is a shade of difference in the significance of the three sets of terms referred to above and the ideals they represent, yet there is close affinity between all these expressions. Here reference has been made to all the three terms simply to hint at the ideal commonly represented by them.

Nature of Vairāgya

The commentators on the “Yoga-Sūtras” have classified Vairāgya under four heads, viz., यतमान, व्यतिरेक, एकेन्द्रिय and वशीकार and explained them at length. Their exposition is by all means reasonable and commendable. We shall endeavour in the following lines to point out in brief, according to our own poor lights, the true nature of Vairāgya in such a way as to make it easily intelligible to all.

Vairāgya Arising from Fear

Enjoyment of worldly pleasures will eventually lead to perdition. For, enjoyment implies acquisition of enjoyable objects, which in its turn entails exertion. Every exertion, again, involves the commission of sins and the result of sin is perdition or misery. Thus, withdrawing from sensual enjoyments from fear of pain, taking the means of enjoyment to be productive of misery, is what may be called Vairāgya through fear.

Vairāgya Through Discrimination

Objects which are supposed to have the power of

gratifying the senses and thus bringing about delight, and the acquisition of which appears to give pleasure, are really speaking, not enjoyable, nor can they bring happiness, nor again there is happiness in them. Out of sheer folly we have wrongly assumed objects full of misery, nay misery itself, to be happiness. That is why they appear to us as pleasurable—whereas, in reality, they are pain itself or at best a source of pain and woe. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

(Gītā V. 22)

“The pleasures which are born of sense-contacts, are verily sources of pain (though appearing as enjoyable to worldly-minded people). They have a beginning and an end (they come and go). Arjuna, it is for this reason that a wise man does not indulge in them.”

Even if these sense-enjoyments do not actually appear to us as transitory, they must be regarded as such and endured, says Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa:—

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥

(Gītā II. 14)

“O son of Kuntī, the contacts between the senses and their objects which give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., are transitory and fleeting; therefore, Arjuna, endure them.”

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has put forth the fruit of this endurance in the following verse:—

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥

(Gītā II. 15)

“Arjuna, the wise man to whom pain and pleasure are alike, and who is not tormented by these contacts, becomes

eligible for immortality.”

The Lord proceeds to tell us in unequivocal terms that a thing which is proved by reason to be non-existent does not really exist.

This is the considered view of philosophers.

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

(Gītā II. 16)

“The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be; the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of truth.”

The Vairāgya which is a product of such discrimination may be called “Vairāgya based on deliberation.”

Vairāgya Through Sādhana

When a Sādhaka, as a result of regular Sādhana, begins to experience an ecstasy of Divine love, and the light of Divine wisdom begins to dawn on his mind, his mind is automatically drawn away from all sensuous objects. All sorts of worldly enjoyments now appear to him as obviously painful and consequently a hindrance in the way of God-realization.

In the eyes of such a Sādhaka, wife and children, etc., who appear so attractive and delightful to worldly-minded man, are contemptible and agonizing.* Wealth and possessions, beauty and youth, cars and conveyances, position and dignity, pomp and show, luxury and decoration, all appear to him as a pestilence, and he regards their association as a source of greater bondage and misery and, in fact, more detestable than

* This should never be taken to mean that wife and children are to be hated and despised in actual practice. A householder who is a seeker of the Divine as well, should treat all with due affection and yet have non-attachment with them at heart.

a stinking dark dungeon. He is as much afraid of honour and praise, regard and respect, as ordinary people are afraid of a lion or a tiger, spirits and genii, or the god of Death himself! He is awfully afraid of visiting a place where there is the remotest chance of his receiving homage, respect or honour. He, therefore, keeps at a respectable distance from such places. Such things as praise and glory, honour and respect, which ordinary people receive with great exultation, make him shy, uncomfortable and miserable, as he regards them as degrading to his soul. He despises honour and praise just as we cannot bear the very sight of unholy and disgusting objects. He does not accept honour or praise even under pressure or to oblige anyone. How can one accept a thing which is disgusting to him?

Those people who offer him honour and praise, are in his eyes simple fellows doing harm to him, though having the best of intentions. A foolish friend is sometimes worse than a foe. He does not, therefore, yield to their importunities for their momentary gratification. He knows that while they will not gain anything thereby, it will decidedly tend towards his degradation. His uncompromising attitude, on the other hand, does not expose him to any blame, much less to the charge of violence. Moreover, it is not morally binding on him to yield to their importunities in this matter. Morality or religion is that abiding principle which stand a person in good stead here as well as hereafter. How can that which is prejudicial to one's secular as well as spiritual interests be blessing to him? That is decidedly not honour but a great calamity. Foolish parents out of blind affection for their little child give it unwholesome food to eat and then feel miserable along with the child. Similarly, these simple-minded friends, being ignorant of the essence of things, seek to push him on the path of sin. A sensible boy will not yield to the unwholesome importunities of his parents and does not incur any sin thereby. Even parents

realizing or visualizing the consequence, do not get angry with him. On considering the pros and cons of the situation even these friends would not take offence. So thinking, he does not accept honour and praise bestowed by anyone. For he knows full well that by accepting these he would be courting ruin. And he is not so self-sacrificing as to ruin himself for the sake of a little gratification of others. Even if he had such a spirit of self-sacrifice, prudence would not approve of his sacrificing his highest interests. May the Lord grant wisdom to those innocent people who out of sheer ignorance compel seekers after truth to accept honour and praise, and thus throw them into the abyss of darkness and misery.

This sort of dislike for worldly objects that one acquires through discrimination arising out of Sādhana, is known as Vairāgya attained through Sādhana. For one who has acquired this type of Vairāgya, wife and children, power and pelf, honour and praise lose all attraction and lustre, even as the moon appears lustreless and pale when the bright orb of the sun has made its appearance in the eastern horizon.

Vairāgya through the Highest Knowledge of Brahma

When the aspirant has realized God, he automatically ceases to have any interest in the various objects of the world, as they now appear to him tasteless and illusive. Then he sees no substance in anything except the all-pervading divine principle. Just as water ceases to appear in the mirage as soon as one comes to know that it is mirage; just as to one who has woke up from sleep and recognized the dream to be a dream, the world of the dream ceases to appear as real even when called to mind. Similarly, the worldly objects no longer appear as substantial and real to seer of the essence of things. A beautiful garden conjured up by a clever sorcerer captivates

the hearts of all others; but the boy with the magician, who is in the know of the secret, is not led away by it, knowing it to be illusive and false. No doubt, he is immensely delighted to see the Māyā of his Master, who is the controller of that Māyā. Similarly, one who has acquired the type of Vairāgya shown above is not led away by worldly enjoyments. Such a person does not recognize even the existence of any object of sense-enjoyment how, then, can he mistake it to be attractive or delightful. Such a person alone becomes eligible for attaining the highest status of Brahmic bliss. This is the supreme type of Vairāgya or stable Vairāgya, as it is called.

Ways to the Attainment of Vairāgya

In the light of the above exposition, aspirants should in the beginning assume that the objects of worldly enjoyments are ultimately harmful, and renounce them even from fear or disgust, taking them to be painful, nay, pain itself. Thoughts inducing Vairāgya will automatically arise in the mind if we repeatedly conjure up visions of dispassion, ponder on the value of renunciation, consider the real worth of the world, visit or hear tales of dead persons, deserted palaces, dilapidated buildings and ruins of houses and reflect on the fate of departed kings and monarchs and live in the company of persons who have cut off all attachment to the world and are thoughtful and wise. One should extricate the mind from the meshes of wife and children, wealth and possessions, glory and renown, honour and fame, etc., knowing them to be painful and abounding in faults of various kinds. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥
असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।

(Gītā XIII. 8-9)

“Dispassion towards the objects of senses, and absence of egoism, constant revolving in mind of the pain and evil inherent in birth, death, old age and disease; absence of attachment, absence of self-identification with son, wife, home etc.”

If we just pause a while and take stock of things, we shall find a number of arguments to bring home to us the fact that all worldly objects are painful. There is an aphorism in the “Yoga-Sūtras”, which runs as under:—

परिणामतापसंस्कारदुःखैर्गुणवृत्तिविरोधाच्च दुःखमेव सर्वं विवेकिनः ।

(II. 15)

“The wise realize that all sense-enjoyments are full of pain inasmuch as they result in pain, nay, their very presence is painful, as also their memory, and because there was conflicting tendencies in the mind.”

We shall try to explain this more fully in the following few lines.

Pain in consequence:—A pleasure which, though appearing as pleasure in the beginning, turns out to be extremely painful in the end, is said to be painful in consequence. Unwholesome food, which is palatable in the beginning but is ultimately harmful to an ailing person, is an instance in point. Just as an ailing person who is given to sense-gratification, takes a dainty dish which is pleasing to the palate, despite the doctor’s protest and feels miserable, weeps and wails in the end; similarly, sense-enjoyments, though appearing attractive and pleasing in the beginning, are very painful in the end. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā:—

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।

परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥

(XVIII. 38)

“The joy which is derived from the contact of the senses with their object, though appearing like nectar in the beginning (at the time of enjoyment), proves to be mischievous like poison

in the end. That is why such a joy is said to be Rājasika.”

The itching sensation produced in the skin by ringworm is very agreeable in the beginning when the parts affected rubbed by the hand; but the scratches thus made eventually bring about a burning sensation which is very painful. Similar is the case with sense-enjoyments. All sense-enjoyments, whether of this world or of the next, end in pain. People attain heavenly bliss as a result of accumulated merit of series of lives; but they, “having enjoyed the spacious heaven-world, their merit exhausted, come back to this world of death.”

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं
क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति।

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa, too, strikes a similar note when he says:—

“Sensual enjoyment is not the goal of this human existence. Even heavenly bliss is limited and painful in the end.” *

The agonizing, nature of sense-enjoyments:—Wife, son, master, wealth and possession and everything else is afflicting and tormenting us at every step. There is not a single object on earth which on careful thought does not appear to be painful. Moreover, when a man finds those around him in a better position, a sense of his limited means makes him envious. There is pain in procuring any object, pain in preserving it, and pain again in losing it. It has been well said:—

अर्थानामर्जने दुःखं तथैव परिपालने।
नाशे दुःखं व्यये दुःखं धिगर्थं क्लेशकारिणम्॥

One has to experience a lot of trouble in earning money, and an equal amount of worry in preserving it. Nay, one has always to burn in the fire of anxiety lest the money hoarded by him may be lost. In other words, money torments us when lost or expended and afflicts us when left behind at the time

* एहि तन कर फल बिषय न भाई।
स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई॥

of death. In short, it is troublesome from the beginning to the end. Hence it is that it has been condemned in the above verse. Similar is the case with children, honour and fame. All these things are painful from the time we seek to obtain them till they are lost to us. There is no sensual enjoyment which does not give pain.

Memory of objects also painful:—Objects such as wife, husband, children, family, wealth and honour—all that we have got, leave their impressions on the mind, so that, when they are lost, their absence makes us extremely miserable. “How prosperous I was; how handsome, well-built and obedient was my son; how faithful was my wife; how happy I was during the lifetime of my husband; my fame had spread in all the corners of the world; I was a millionaire; but alas! to what pitiable condition I have been reduced today; I am a penniless and forlorn creature.” Thoughts of this nature torment those who have met with reverses in life. Although there are millions and millions as destitute as he from the very beginning, they are not so miserable as he is. They alone who retain impressions of joy experienced at the time of enjoying sense-objects abundantly miss them when they are no longer present. This is what is meant by the term “संस्कारदुःखता”.

Besides this, one thing more should be borne in mind in this connection, viz., that all sense-pleasures of this world are ever associated with pain.

Pain accruing from conflicting propensities of the mind:—Suppose a man expects to get a sum of ten thousand rupees if he takes recourse to falsehood, deceit, duplicity and treachery. The virtuous element in him says, “It is not good to earn money through sin; it is better to beg or even to starve than to take recourse to sinful actions.” The propensity of greed, on the other hand, says, “Where is the harm? What objection can there be in telling a lie only once? An insignificant bit of greed,

the Lord that the Gītā says:—

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा-
 अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
 द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसङ्गै-
 र्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥

(XV. 5)

“Those undeluded ones, who are free from pride and infatuation, who have conquered the vice of attachment and dwell constantly in God, and whose desires have completely disappeared—freed from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, they attain that imperishable Supreme State.”

The Fruit of Vairāgya

One who is thus conscious of God, and God alone and nothing else, is said to have attained irrevocable Samādhi (absorption) or the Jīvanmukti stage. The above verse describes the mental condition of such people. How such God-attained people work and behave in the world is stated at length in verses 13 to 19 of Chapter XII of the Gītā, which run as under:—

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
 निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥
 संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
 मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥
 यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
 हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥
 अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
 सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥
 यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
 शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥
 समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
 शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविषयजितः ॥
 तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
 अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

“He who is free from malice towards all beings, who is friendly as well as compassionate, who has no feeling of meum and is free from egoism, to whom pleasure and pain are alike and who is forgiving by nature, who is ever content and mentally united to Me, who has subdued his body, mind and senses and has a firm resolve, who has surrendered his mind and intellect to Me—that devotee of Mine is dear to Me.”

“He who is not a source of annoyance to the world, and who never feels offended with the world, who is free from delight and anger, perturbation and fear, he is dear to Me.”

“He who craves for nothing, who is both internally and externally pure, is clever and impartial, and has risen above all distractions, who renounces the feeling of doership in all undertakings—that devotee is dear to Me.”

“He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, who renounces both good and evil and is full of devotion to Me, is dear to Me.”

“He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., and is free from attachment.”

“He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to Me, that man is dear to Me.”

Thus withdrawing our minds from this unsubstantial world and cutting of attachment with all the enjoyments of this world and the next, let us strive to the best of our ability for the attainment of the Divine.



Surrender

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 62)

“Seek refuge in Him alone with all your being, Arjuna. Through His grace you shall obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode.”

Enjoyment of everlasting bliss is the ultimate goal of human existence, and God alone is the abode of everlasting bliss; hence God-realization is the sole object of human life. A number of ways and means for the realization of this end have been suggested by our sages and saints for the various types and grades of aspirants. But on careful consideration it would appear that none of them is so simple, easy and convenient as surrendering oneself to God. That is why it has been extolled in almost all the scriptures. Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, for one, begins with surrender and also ends with surrender. The discourse of the Lord commences only after Arjuna addresses the following entreaty to Him:—

शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ।

“I am Your disciple—Pray instruct me, who have sought refuge in You.”

And He concludes the same with the following exhortation:—

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 66)

“Surrendering all duties to Me, seek refuge in Me alone, I shall absolve you of all sins; grieve not.”

Even in the preceding verses the Lord has stressed the importance of this discipline more than anything else.

However degraded one may be by birth or by virtue of his conduct, and however involved in sin, he can easily attain the supreme goal by merely surrendering himself to God. The Lord says:—

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम्॥

(Gītā IX. 32)

“Arjuna, womanfolk, Vaiśyas (members of the trading class), Śūdras (those belonging to the labouring class), and even those that are born of the womb of sin (such as the pariah), taking refuge in Me, they too attain the supreme goal.”

The Śruti also says:—

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम्।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत्॥
एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम्।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते॥

(Kāthopaniṣad I. ii. 16-17)

“It is this Indestructible Principle which is all-pervading, it is the Supreme Entity; it is by knowing this principle that one is enabled to realize the fruit of one’s desires. Dependence on this principle is of supreme importance, it excels all other dependence. One who has realized this, is adored even in the abode of Brahmā, the Creator.”

The sage Patañjali also declares it to be the easiest method of attaining Samādhi (absorption in God), when he says:—

ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा।

(Yoga-Sūtras I. 23)

“(One can attain Samādhi) even by surrendering oneself to God.”

Patañjali further goes to describe the result of it as follows:—

ततः प्रत्यक्चेतनाधिगमोऽप्यन्तरायाभावश्च।

(Yoga-Sūtras I. 29)

“Surrender to God ultimately leads to His realization and the disappearance of all obstacles.”

Lord Śrī Rāma, too, has made the following reassuring proclamation:—

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्व्रतं मम ॥

“I rid him of all fears who betakes himself to Me only once and seeks My protection, calling himself as Mine—this is my vow.”

The above questions should suffice to give an indication of the volumes of praise that the Śāstras have bestowed on surrender to God, which it is impossible to reproduce within the space of a few pages. Now let us consider what is meant by Surrender. Surrender does not consist in betaking oneself to the Lord only verbally. Surrender ordinarily means wholly dedicating one’s mind, speech and body to the Lord; but such an act of surrender is not accomplished by simply repeating the formula ‘श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु’ (I offer this to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa), however well-meaning the assertion may be. Had this assertion alone constituted the act of surrender, an untold number of God-dedicated persons would be available everywhere and must have existed in the past. It is therefore necessary to understand what is meant by dedication.

Total and exclusive surrender to God consists in:—

- (a) exclusive dependence on God;
- (b) recognizing God alone as one’s greatest refuge, one’s ultimate resort, nay, one’s everything;
- (c) relinquishing shame, fear, pride, love of praise and attachment and giving up the sense of identity with one’s body and the feeling of meum of mineness in respect of one’s worldly possessions;
- (d) constantly remembering the appellations, virtues and

glories of the Lord and meditating on His Being;

(e) selflessly discharging one's duties as enjoined by the Lord for the sake of the Lord Himself and thinking of Him all the time.

The following four principal items require to be grasped by an aspirant who seeks to surrender himself to the Lord:—

(1) to dedicate one's all to God, taking it to be His property;

(2) to remain perfectly contented with what has been ordained by Him;

(3) to discharge one's duties as enjoined by Him, for His sake; and

(4) to think of Him as a matter of course at all times without interruption.

Now we shall deal with each one of these items at some length:—

Dedication of Everything

Dedication of one's all to God does not mean that one should leave one's home and take to the life of a recluse, or that one should shirk one's legitimate duties and become indolent and inactive. To withdraw the feeling of mineness that one wrongly entertains in respect of things mundane, may be taken as making over that which really belongs to Him. In fact, everything belongs to Him; nay we are very often robbed of what we call our own and thus made to realize that they are not ours; but we in our ignorance are led to regard them as our own and that is why we bewail their loss when we are forced to part with them.

Let us take the case of a wealthy merchant who owns a big concern and has placed it in the charge of a manager. Believing him to be honest and dutiful, the merchant has given to his manager the entire charge of looking after his property, conducting the business and carrying on all other transactions

regularly on his behalf. Now, the duty of the manager is to do all that is required of him in accordance with the instructions of his master and the procedure laid down by him with great efficiency, care and honesty and without ever claiming anything belonging to his master, as his own or entertaining even for a moment the feeling of meum in respect of the same and without asserting his own individuality. He may have to deal in millions, exercise control over millions worth of property like the proprietor himself, sign bills, cheques and other documents on behalf of the proprietor and do all such things; but nevertheless he should not recognize anything belonging to the firm as his own. The capital invested belongs to the proprietor, the profits accruing from the business are also his, and so is the liability for losses.

Should the manager through mistake, neglect or dishonestly ever seek or embezzle a part of his master's money, taking it to be his own, or misappropriate his property or the profits that have accrued to him, he is held guilty of dishonesty and theft. On being sued in a court of law he is dispossessed of the property thus misappropriated, is awarded a severe punishment which leaves an indelible blot on his character, is discredited in society and becomes miserable for all time to come. Similarly, if he shirks his responsibilities even after taking charge of his master's business and violates the rules laid down for him, he is likewise to blame. Hence both these practices are forbidden for a manager.

In a like manner the whole of this universe belongs to God. He is the Creator of all objects, the Controller, the Supporter and the Lord. He has endowed us with a body and placed us in circumstances which we deserved according to our past actions, and enjoined upon us the duty of looking after a definite number of objects belonging to Him and also chalked out the line of action to be followed by us. But we unfortunate beings

have erroneously assumed ownership over things belonging to Him, and that is why we have to undergo such miseries. Should we manage to tear the veil of this delusion and come to realize that everything belongs to God; that we are only His servants, and that our only duty is to serve Him, our Divine Master will recognize us to be honest and will be pleased to shower His favours and blessings on us. Liberation from the bonds of Māyā, Illusion, is the greatest blessing for us, ignorant beings. As soon as we realize that everything that exists belongs to God, we shall be rid of the spell of mineness. And the feeling that all that exists is nothing but God, will destroy our egoism. In other words, as soon as we realize that God alone is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe, the feeling of “I” and “mine” in respect of the same will disappear. The feeling of “I” and “mine” alone constitutes bondage. The devotee who had dedicated himself to God is freed from the bondage of “I” and “mine” and comes to realize that God alone exists and that everything belongs to Him.

This constitutes what is known as dedication. As soon as an aspirant dedicates himself to God in this way he is freed from all bondage and rid of all worries. He who is given to worrying, he who feels himself bound and seeks freedom from bondage, has not been able to comprehend the Divine Reality, nor has he surrendered himself to God. An aspirant who treads the path of surrender no longer worries himself for his salvation. This is quite natural. For, if a man worries even after he has dedicated himself to God, his surrender has no meaning. He is looked after by his master to whom he has surrendered himself.

A Hindi poet says:—

जो जाको सरणो लियो ताकहँ ताकी लाज।

उलटे जल मछली चलै बह्यो जात गजराज॥

“He who has dedicated himself to someone else, is

secure in the arms of the latter. A fish, for instance, is able to swim even against the current because of its dependence on water, whereas an elephant who relies on his own strength is swept along the stream."

If King Śivi out of generosity and compassion could protect a pigeon seeking shelter from him, even by parting with his own flesh, will that supreme Lord who is the protector of the helpless and an illimitable and unfathomable ocean of compassion, and in comparison with whose unbounded love for those who seek shelter from Him, the loftiest instance of tenderness in the world's history, pales into insignificance, fail to extend His protecting hand to us and to redeem us on our betaking ourselves to Him? If we continue to worry about our salvation even then, and at the same time consider ourselves to be God-dedicated, it is something very mean of us; this shows we have not been able to understand the real meaning of surrender. As a matter of fact, it is immaterial for a God-dedicated devotee whether he is redeemed or not. Surrendering himself along with his mind and intellect at His feet, he becomes altogether free from anxiety. Why, then, should he care for his salvation? Far from worrying about his salvation, a devotee who has grasped the real meaning of surrender does not like even to recall the topic. If the Lord Himself ever broaches the subject to him, he feels that his surrender is not complete and is therefore, very much ashamed and begins to reproach himself. He realizes that had there been no desire of liberation lurking somewhere in his mind, he would not have had to face that unpleasant situation. In fact, liberation is nothing as compared to Divine Love, and it is a matter of great shame to seek liberation in preference to the latter. He would, therefore, feel that the desire of liberation was a blot on his surrender and, realizing his own frailty and meanness and his lack of faith in God, would burst into tears and address

the following piteous appeal to the Lord in solitude:—

“O my Lord! so long as the desire of liberation lingers in my heart, how can I claim to be Thy servant? Nay, I am a slave of liberation. I covet something other than Thyself, serve Thee for the sake of liberation, and yet consider myself to be Thy disinterested lover and dedicated to Thee. This is nothing short of hypocrisy on my part. Pray stamp out this evil. Nay, I beseech Thee to banish from my heart the selfish desire of liberation and to be pleased to bestow on me Thy undivided love. It is sheer childishness on my part to ask for anything from one who is all-mercy and unparalleled in everything; but you know, my Lord, one who is in distress does not scruple to do anything.”

In this way a God-dedicated devotee surrenders his all at the lotus-like feet of the Lord and becomes free from all anxiety.

Contentment with Everything Ordained by the Lord

One who has attained this stage remains cheerful in every circumstance. Gain or loss, pleasure or pain, whatever comes to his lot as a consequence of his past actions, whether brought about by the will of someone else or by accident, he welcomes as a merciful dispensation of Providence and remains uniformly cheerful, unruffled and calm under every circumstance. The Gītā says:—

यदृच्छालाभसंतुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः ।
समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥

(IV. 22)

“He, who is contented with whatever is got unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all pairs of opposites (like joy and grief), and as balanced in success and failure—such a Karmayogī, though acting, is not bound.”

A God-dedicated devotee really knows that whatever

comes to his lot as a matter of course, accrues to him by divine dispensation which is full of equity and mercy. He therefore accepts it cheerfully and with a grateful heart as a boon conferred by his most benevolent Lord. Just as one gladly accepts the award given by a loving friend of his, whom he knows to be impartial and just, even though it is unfavourable to him; relying on the latter's sense of justice, discretion, thoughtfulness, benevolence, impartiality and love, so does a God-dedicated devotee cheerfully and reverently accept the divine dispensation, however unpleasant it may be. For he knows that whatever is ordained by his benevolent Lord, who is absolutely merciful, is impregnated with mercy, love, justice and benevolence. He never grudges any decree of Providence whatsoever.

At times the Lord puts His dedicated devotees to severe tests. Although He knows everything belonging to the past, present and the future, and there is nothing concealed from His view, He indulges in His Divine Sport of testing the devotion of His devotee, in order to purge his heart of all impurities in the shape of pride, arrogance, infatuation and so on and to make it transparent, and to fortify him against all evil influences and thus to do him lasting good. Such lovers of God as have understood the real meaning of surrender, never feel anything disagreeable to their mind. No movement of a juggler ever strikes his mate as disagreeable or unpleasant. The latter makes himself subservient to the former's will and submits to every activity of his most cheerfully. A devotee, likewise, cheerfully joins every sport of the Lord. He knows that whatever he sees around him is nothing but a sport of his Lord, who is a unique player indulging in sports of various

kinds. He feels that the Lord is extremely kind to him in so far as He has associated him in His sport and regards himself very fortunate in having been chosen by the Lord as an instrument to assist Him in His Divine Play (Līlā). Realizing this, he visualizes the Lord's adroitness in every game of His; nay, he perceives the Lord Himself concealed behind it and is transported with joy at every moment. The above account relates to that class of devotees who have absolutely surrendered themselves to the Lord. Nay, even one who is practising surrender takes every piece of fortune and misfortune to be His merciful dispensation and rejoices in it. Now one may pertinently ask: It is quite natural and in the fitness of things that one rejoices when he meets with a piece of good fortune; but how is it possible to rejoice in adversity just as in happiness? Our reply is that in the eyes of one who has realized the Divine Principle even the gratification and solace derived from earthly enjoyment, are symptoms of morbidity. He transcends both pleasure and pain arising from favourable and unfavourable objects and resulting from meritorious and sinful acts respectively. Even one who is on the road to this consummation must feel cheerful at least. Just as a wise patient, who is suffering from a serious disease, gladly takes a bitter dose administered by a clever doctor and feels grateful to him, even so one should cheerfully endure hardships inflicted by God who is an extremely benevolent, unselfish and unerring doctor, and should rejoice and feel indebted to Him for His benevolence and mercy. A loving devotee who has dedicated himself to God endures, great hardships most cheerfully and rejoices at every moment, recalling His kindness. He realizes that just as a benevolent doctor cures his patient by cutting his festering sore and removing all putrescent matter

therefrom, so does the Lord sometimes apply the knife of hardships to His patients with an eye to their welfare and cures them. His provision is full of mercy. Realizing this, the devotee remains contented with every decree of Providence. He is not perturbed amidst troubles and does not covet pleasures.

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

(Gītā II. 56)

Acting in Accordance with the Injunctions of the Lord

Thus, having no desire left in him for the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, a devotee can never commit a forbidden act out of attachment or from a selfish motive. Every activity of his is in conformity with the injunctions of the Lord. None of his actions ever goes against His will. For he has merged his own will in that of the Lord, he has no independent will of his own. Even an ordinary faithful servant does not want to do anything contrary to his master's wishes; and, if he ever does so through some mistake, he feels ashamed of it and is filled with remorse for the same. Much less would a faithful devotee who has dedicated himself to God out of pure love do anything against His will. Just as a virtuous lady who is devoted to her husband, always acts in accordance with the wishes of her most beloved husband and follows him like a shadow, in the same way a loving devotee who had dedicated himself to God follows the Divine Will and does everything for Him, taking everything to be His.

Now it may be asked: When God is not manifest to all, how are we to know His wishes or commands? Our reply to this is that in the first place, the scriptures embody His commandments, so to say; for the ancient seers, who were devotees of God and possessed knowledge of the past,

present and the future, wrote them mostly in accordance with His view. Secondly, works like the Bhagavadgītā contain His direct commands. Thirdly, the Lord, being omnipresent and the inner controller of all, dwells in the hearts of all living beings. Man generally receives proper guidance if he consults Him within his heart with an unbiased mind and with a genuine desire to have his doubts removed. Nobody's conscience honestly sanctions the practice of untruthfulness, theft or violence. Here lies the clue to the Divine Will.

If we get a doubtful reply from our conscience to any of our queries, due to our intellect being clouded by a thick coating of ignorance, and are accordingly unable to decide upon a particular course of action, we should seek the advice of such men as are unselfish, virtuous and conversant with the principles of Ethics. It is profitable to consult worthy souls even on points about which we have no doubts in our mind. For so long as one has not realized God one is liable to mistake untruth for truth. Hence one should do well to have one's judgment confirmed by the opinion of the wise. As one's heart gets purified one begins to comprehend the Divine will rightly. Thenceforward whatever the aspirant does is mostly in consonance with His Will.

It is generally observed that a faithful servant who always acts in accordance with his master's wishes, is able to read the latter's mind on receiving the slightest indication from him. When such is the case with ordinary people, what wonder if a God-dedicated devotee begins to know His will through piety, faith and love.

There is one more criterion of judging the Divine will. It must be understood at the very outset that God is all-wise, friendly to all, an ocean of mercy, the Inner Self of all and engaged in doing good to all. Hence He can never

countenance an act which may in anyway be prejudicial to the best interests of any living being whatsoever. Accordingly, such an act alone is in conformity with the Divine will as is really conducive to the welfare of others; and, on the contrary, that which is harmful to others is something contrary to His will.

There are some who in their ignorance recognize it as an article of their faith to harm others or inflict bodily injury on them, declaring that it has been sanctioned by their scriptures and religion. This is, however, an erroneous belief. It can never be the intention of God or religion that one should harm others or practise violence on others. Of course, punishing someone with an eye to his welfare, just as the parents punish their child or a teacher punishes his pupil, is a different thing.

Thus every activity of a devotee is in conformity with the Divine will, so that he can never commit a sinful or forbidden act. Every dealing of his is naturally straightforward, pure and conducive to public good; for he has no selfish interest in the world, no attachment with anything, no fear.

Not to speak of a God-dedicated devotee, fear and sin forsake even those who really believe in the existence of God. A king or his officials are not bodily present in a lonely retreat at night time; but the very existence of a Government deters people from committing unlawful acts. It is even much more difficult to violate a law in the presence of a Government official. When such is the awe inspired by an earthly Government, how can one who perceives the existence of the Almighty Lord everywhere commit a sin in His august and sacred presence? The all-pervasiveness of God proves that He is present everywhere. Hence one who subscribes to the above view can have no fear. For, when even the presence of a single Government official takes away all fear of thieves, what fear can there be

for one who is always and everywhere accompanied by the Lord of the universe? Those who indulge in sinful acts, even though proclaiming themselves devotees, or are haunted by fear of death and other things every moment, do not in reality, believe in the existence of God. Those who believe in God are always free from sin and are fearless.

Constant Remembrance of the Lord

The only thing a God-dedicated devotee is afraid of, is forgetting his most beloved Lord. In fact, he can never forget Him; for even a moment's mental separation from the Lord becomes unbearable to him. It becomes his second nature to remember the Lord constantly, having dedicated all his actions to Him, and to feel extremely uneasy like a serpent robbed of its gem or a fish taken out of water, when put out of mind of the Lord:—

तदर्पिताखिलाचारता तद्विस्मरणे परमव्याकुलता ।

(Nārada-Sūtras)

God is the essence of his life, his highest riches, his greatest refuge, his final resort and his ultimate goal. And to think of His names and virtues at every moment, to forget himself in His love, to lose consciousness of the outside world and get intoxicated with love, and to dance in ecstasy becomes his daily routine.

क्वचिद्रुदन्त्यच्युतचिन्तया क्वचि-

द्धसन्ति नन्दन्ति वदन्त्यलौकिकाः ।

नृत्यन्ति

गायन्त्यनुशीलयन्त्यजं

भवन्ति तूष्णीं परमेत्य निर्वृताः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. iii. 32)

“These blessed devotees sometimes weep in loving memory of the Lord, sometimes they laugh, sometimes rejoice, sometimes they talk marvellous things, sometimes they dance, sometimes they sing, sometimes they imitate

the behaviour of the Lord (who is unborn) and sometimes they sit calm and quiet, enjoying Supreme Bliss.”

Thus, having realized the secret of surrender of God these devotees become one with the Lord.

तद्बुद्ध्यस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥

(Gītā V. 17)

“Those whose mind and intellect are wholly merged in Him, who are constantly established in identity with Him, and are exclusively devoted to Him, their sins being wiped out by wisdom, go to whence there is no return.”

It is with regard to such people that the Lord has made the following statements:—

प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥

(Gītā VII. 17)

“For extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me.”

तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

(Gītā VI. 30)

“I am never out of sight of him, nor is he ever out of sight of Me.”

Whatever such a man does through his body is not reckoned as ‘action’ in the ordinary sense of the term. Absorbed in ecstasy, that God-dedicated devotee only imitates the blissful activities of the sportive Lord. Hence his actions, too, are of the nature of sport. The Lord says:—

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥

(Gītā VI. 31)

“He who, established in unity, worships Me as residing in all beings (as their very Self), that Yogī, though engaged in all forms of activities dwells in Me.”

Hence he treats everyone as his own self, there is no

possibility of harm accruing from him to anyone. Of such God-dedicated, God-identified souls, who behold their own self projected everywhere, there are some of the type of Śrī Śukadeva, who move about in this world as one quite indifferent to its working and with a view to redeeming humanity; there are others of the type of Arjuna who mould their conduct in accordance with the injunctions of the Lord and are engaged in performing their legitimate duties, with their mind always fixed on Him; there are still others of the type of the God-intoxicated cowherd-maids of revered memory, who remain absorbed in ecstasy of Divine Love; while there is a fourth class of blessed beings who conduct themselves in this world as stupid and insane persons like the famous Jada Bharata.

Themselves liberated, such God-dedicated devotees turn out to be the saviours of the world. The very sight and touch of these exalted souls, and conversing with them, nay, their every thought has a sanctifying effect. The very atmosphere of the place they visit is purified, and the part of the earth they frequent, becomes sacred and is turned into a place of pilgrimage. The coming into this world of such souls only is worth while, and it is of such noble souls that the following remarks hold good:—

कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था
वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन।
अपारसंवित्सुखसागरेऽस्मिँ-
ल्लीनं परे ब्रह्मणि यस्य चेतः॥

“The family of that noble soul is sanctified, his mother is blessed, nay, the whole earth is full of merit in so far as it bears him on its bosom—whose mind has merged in the Supreme Being who is an ocean of limitless knowledge and bliss.”

Exclusive Surrender

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥
सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(Gītā XVIII. 62, 66)

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

“Seek refuge in Him alone with all your being, Arjuna. Through His grace you shall obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode.” “Surrendering all duties to Me, seek refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins; grieve not.”

In response to the above summons of the Lord let us all take refuge in Him. Exclusive surrender to the Lord briefly consists in shaking off bashfulness and fear, turning one's back on honour and praise, and renouncing attachment and the feeling of I-ness and My-ness in respect of one's body and the world outside; recognizing God alone as one's supreme shelter and final goal, nay, one's all-in-all, and constantly dwelling with undivided attention upon His Name, virtues, power and nature with supreme devotion, reverence and love, discharging one's legitimate duties in a perfectly disinterested way as a behest from the Lord and for the sake of the Lord, and with one's mind always fixed on Him, and keeping one's mind well-balanced in pleasure and pain, taking both as a blessing from God.

Dwelling on the real nature of God in one's mind, comprehending with one's intellect the supreme truth that all that exists, is nothing but God; repeating the Divine name with one's breath (Prāṇa); hearing with reverence the glorification of the virtues, powers and characteristics of the

Lord with one's ears; beholding the images of the Lord and the sacred persons of His loving devotees with one's eyes; recounting His glories and virtues and chanting His holy name with one's tongue; and performing disinterested service to the Lord Himself and His devotees with one's body—all these are included in the act of surrender. It is by thus devoting oneself to His service that one is blessed with Divine love.

Everything in this world that we call our own really belongs to God. One foolishly arrogates their ownership to himself and thereby feels happy or miserable. All that is God's should be made to serve His purpose. One should rejoice in both cases—even if all worldly objects are reduced to dust so as to be able to serve His purpose, or if they remain intact for lending themselves to His use. No one should commit the mistake of looking upon worldly things as one's own property nor should anyone regard them as something to be enjoyed by himself. For, as we have said before, everything in reality belongs to God; hence one should always conduct himself in the world with this feeling that he is dedicating to God what, in fact, belongs to Him. Such a behaviour will ultimately enable him to attain what is known as surrender to God and which is only another name for Divine love.

In this way, whatever we do should be done as an act of offering to God. This is what they call 'अर्पण' or consecration. Whatever is happening is happening under His dispensation; it is the will of the sportive Lord that is responsible for all this sport. One should not fall a victim to vain rationalization in this connection. Let us merge our will into His and dedicate our life to Him with all our being. When we have thus consecrated our very life to Him and when everyone of our actions will be turned into an offering to the Lord,

then alone we should think that we have secured an iota of Divine love, that we are on the way to Self-surrender.

Once we have fully surrendered ourselves to the Lord, nothing remains but the Lord Himself who is all-truth, all-intelligence and all-bliss. That Supreme Being, who is limitless, unthinkable, perfect and all-pervading, fills all space as a compact and endless mass of bliss. This bliss should never be lost sight of. Merging oneself in the all-blissful Lord, one should become all-blissful himself. Whatever meets the eye, wherever it appears and to whomsoever it appears, all is God and God alone. As a matter of fact, the all-blissful Lord lends Himself to the knowledge of no one else but Himself. This in reality constitutes what they call Exclusive Surrender.

Offering of Self to God

The subject of self-offering to God should be critically analysed and examined. The word 'self' here means all the three bodies* of men together with the soul, and offering means surrender. The things over which we exercise our right of proprietorship, to offer them all unreservedly to God, is self-offering. This is one of the principal items of surrender to God. It may also be described as an essential item of Devotion. There are four states or phases of surrender. The first stage is marked by clinging to God's Name or His transcendent Form. The second stage is characterized by subordinating one's will to God, that is, acting in conformity with His will or doing as He may direct him to do. The third phase of surrender consists in cheerfully accepting all the divine decrees; and the fourth stage is that of absolute surrender in which one commits himself to the loving care of God, and surrenders his whole being, his very 'I', to God. When 'I' myself stand offered to God, all that I possess naturally becomes His property.

Of the nine stages of Devotion, self-offering represents the final stage. If it is asked where lies the difference between the attitude of a servant towards his master and that of self-offering, it may be answered that apparently there lies no difference, inasmuch as the devotee who adopts the attitude of a servant of God, will offer himself to God, in the final stage, and the devotee who has offered his self to God, is also a servant of God. But nevertheless the difference between the two positions may be brought out by the following illustration. There are two clerks working in a business firm; they hold all the assets and liabilities as well as the property of the firm to belong to the master of the firm. But whereas one of them

* The three bodies of men are the physical, subtle and causal bodies.

takes in return for his services what is barely necessary for his maintenance, viz., food and clothing, the other in addition to this draws a monthly salary as well. While the latter expects something in return for his services, the attitude of the former is absolutely disinterested. The disinterested worker naturally stands at a higher level. Both of them stand in the relation of servant to the firm; but whereas the former has dedicated his self to the master the latter has not.

In ancient and medieval times there was another class of servants in existence. They were known as slaves or helots. They were born as slaves and died as such. They never received any emoluments for their services and could be given away as dowries. The system is still in vogue in some ancient kingdoms. The surrender of a devotee is even more complete than that of these slaves. In a war between two kings one is vanquished and surrenders himself to the other, addressing the victor he says:—"I am completely at your mercy, you have every right over my person and my kingdom and may do as you like with them. You may either kill me, release me from bondage or even return my kingdom to me." This is also a form of surrender, but the surrender here is actuated by fear, and not by love or reverence. If the victor king persecutes the vanquished, the latter may feel aggrieved by such treatment, for he has surrendered himself out of a sense of helplessness. Contrary to this, the person who surrenders himself to another out of reverence, devotion and love, will experience a joy even if he is persecuted by the object of his love and devotion. Even slaves feel aggrieved when harassed and persecuted by their master; for the feeling of reverence and love is absent in their surrender. One who offers and surrenders himself through love, reverence and devotion, will not feel aggrieved however much he may be ill-treated. The demon King Bali's surrender was actuated by love and reverence and not by fear and

helplessness. He was warned by his preceptor Śukrācārya that the child before him was no ordinary Brāhmaṇa child and that He would strip him of all his possessions, nevertheless, with open eyes and in a spirit of loving devotion Bali offered his all to the Lord. He said to his preceptor, "When it is the Lord Himself who is going to take my all, there can be nothing more delightful to me." The mind, intellect and body, etc., of the devotee who offers himself to God in a like manner, are no longer his; they now belong to God. He can no longer claim them as his own. Among material objects the puppet may be cited as an illustration of such absolute surrender. The puppet places itself entirely at the disposal of the wire-puller who does whatever he likes with it. He may attire it, make it fight or do anything else with it. It does not do anything on its own initiative. The puppet, however, is an insentient object; it has no consciousness. The person who consciously offers himself to God just as the puppet places itself at the disposal of the wire-puller, automatically develops within himself other phases of surrender as well. I cannot call to mind a better illustration of surrender than the puppet. The juggler's monkey may also be mentioned in this connection, but it supplies an illustration of obeying the commands of the master. This no doubt is an aspect of surrender, but the main thing is to offer ourselves completely to God. Just as the ownership of a cow which is given over to a priest, is transferred to the priest, one who offers himself to God can no longer exercise any right or authority over himself. A close consideration will show that all things belong to God from the very beginning, and we have wrongly assumed our right of possession over them which should be relinquished. One who realizes this truth remains unperturbed and unshaken under all circumstances. Not only this, he gets absorbed in ecstatic joy; he derives happiness from the happiness of his Master and since his Master is never

unhappy, he too is always happy. Whatever he now does he does at the bidding of his Master and in conformity with His wishes; for his mind, intellect and body have been offered to the Lord. Everything now belongs to God, and he no longer exercises his authority over them. Having offered his self to God with devotion, he resigns himself completely to the will of the Lord, so that he never forgets the Paramātmā, and is always immersed in His thoughts.

A devotee who has thrown himself at the mercy of the Lord is sure to attain Him, no matter if he meditates on Him as something apart from him or merges his identity in Him, whether he maintains his separate identity or identifies himself with God. But he has no independent will of his own in the matter. He surrenders all his proprietary right to his Master and will do whatever He bids him do. A devotee who has surrendered himself to God, should never possess a desire of his own. If any desire ever appears in him, it should be regarded as a defect in his surrender. Yet that is not a vital defect. Did not Bali ask for permission to stay in the lower regions? He did not offer any suggestions of his own accord, but there was no harm in his expressing the desire of his heart when asked by the Lord. He is no doubt a greater devotee who does not accept anything from the Lord, even when He offers it; his, indeed, is a greater surrender than that of Bali. A devotee who has truly surrendered himself to God will address the following words, or something approaching them to the Lord when offered the boon: "O Lord, whom do You offer this boon? Am I not Your own? Do You want to get rid of me by offering this boon? If such is Your desire let it be so, since everything depends on Your will. A father may expel his son from home without giving him a pie, may dismiss him with a paltry hundred or two hundred rupees or make him the master of the whole property. The father asks the son to live

apart only when he perceives that the son has a desire to establish himself separately. Otherwise why should he do so? Therefore, O Lord, when You ask me to seek a boon, it is certain that the idea of living apart from You must be lurking somewhere in my mind, else why should You ask me to do so? Surely I must be guilty of misdemeanour and crave Your forgiveness. All that exists in this world belongs to You. If I therefore accept a boon from You, where shall I find a place to keep it apart from You?" This form of surrender can be made even by those who worship God as friend or as their Master. Self-surrender is, therefore, an independent aspect of Bhakti (Devotion). Those who treat the Lord as their friend or Master may adopt this form of Devotion if they choose; and there is no objection if they do not adopt it. It may be argued that friendship will be complete only when there is full surrender to the friend. This is no doubt true; but one can remain a friend even without surrender. The surrender of Vibhīṣaṇa does not appear to be of a very high order. It was the Gopīs who truly surrendered themselves to Śrī Kṛṣṇa even as friends. They did not regard themselves as independent and treated themselves only as chattel belonging to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. A devotee may develop all the nine aspects of Devotion or only some of them. One engaged in such forms of Devotion as remembrance of God or meditation, worship or salutation may not surrender himself to God. Of course if one has developed all the other aspects of Devotion, and has not been able to cultivate the spirit of surrender, his Bhakti is no doubt deficient to that extent. One who lacks the spirit of surrender may be a devotee and may be called a devotee, but the glory of a devotee who has made a surrender of himself to God is unique. That is why self-surrender has been recognized as the final stage among the nine different aspects or stages of Devotion. That is the highest form of Devotion.

The first stage of Bhakti is 'hearing' (of God's glory). Without hearing there can be no Bhakti. If any instance of Bhakti without 'hearing' comes to notice, past Saṁskāra or association will surely be traceable in that case, which shows that the individual in question must have gone through the process of 'hearing' in his previous life. Thus devotion begins. The individual first hears the glory of God and his interest being aroused thereby, he takes to the path of Devotion. Self-offering represents the final stage of Devotion—all other stages are recovered by it. Once self-offering is made, Bhakti becomes exclusive; all the aspects of surrender then manifest themselves of their own accord in the individual. What Patañjali has described as 'ईश्वरप्रणिधान' (meditation of God) is also achieved, and the fruit of that meditation, viz., attainment of Samādhi (oneness with God) is also realized. He no longer worries about his deliverance, for his deliverance is already an accomplished fact.

The devotee who has surrendered himself to God becomes altogether free from anxiety and care. He is no longer troubled by fear or worry of any sort, whether in relation to this world or to the next. A man of ordinary means who is running a school, troubles himself day and night over thoughts to find the means of conducting the institution. But if a patron possessing sufficient financial strength takes up the work, the former becomes free from all worries. He may now and then attend to that work even now but he no longer feels worried. Similarly, if one goes abroad after entrusting his affairs to a responsible friend or officer, he does not worry about the conduct of his affairs during his absence. Even so, one who has offered himself to God, can have no room for fear and anxiety. On the contrary, his joy will know no bounds. If a millionaire adopts a penniless child as his son, the child will gladly sit on the lap of his adoptive father and leave off all care about his future. He knows that

whereas he was a pauper only the other day, he is now heir to property worth crores of rupees. His joy knows no bound now, since his adoption has solved the problem of his food and clothing forever. When such is the joy of a boy who has been adopted by a human father, who can describe the joy of the devotee who has surrendered himself to God? He can have no fear of any sort. When fear leaves the child adopted by even an ordinary man of wealth, how can he who has found shelter in the protecting arms of the Lord, have any fear? One enjoys unbounded and ineffable peace in that state. An adopted child of wealthy father may go to the length of designing against the latter if there is any clash of interests and his own interest is adversely affected; for wealth alone is the pivot of his interest. This will be a height of baseness and ingratitude on his part. No one, however, seeks the protecting arms of the Lord from any selfish motive. He simply rejoices in the fact that Lord has taken him under His protection. We cannot comprehend the nature of his joy. It is something unique. Suppose the millionaire in question goes to interview the Viceroy accompanied by some of his men including the boy whom he proposes to adopt as his son. Questioned by the Viceroy the boy replies that he is the millionaire's adopted son, but unless and until the millionaire himself confirms the statement the Viceroy will not accept it. If the boy calls on the Viceroy a second time alone, the Viceroy will refuse to receive him and will insist on his producing a letter from the millionaire inasmuch as the Viceroy knows that it is the boy who says he is the millionaire's son, the millionaire himself does not acknowledge this fact. Thus the statement of the boy carries no weight. The boy who declares himself as the millionaire's son does not derive the same pleasure as he does when the millionaire himself acknowledges the fact. Similarly, at present it is we who call ourselves His. But we shall be really His, only when the Lord

acknowledges us as His own. Who can describe the joy of the blessed soul whom the Lord takes under His protection? He is actuated by Love and not by any selfish motive. If the father tyrannizes over the adopted son the latter may rebel against the father, because he allows himself to be adopted only out of greed for wealth. But the devotee who offers himself to God through disinterested Love will consider himself blessed even if his body is hacked to pieces. We do not find an apt illustration to describe the condition of this devotee. A visitor approaches a Mahātmā and offers him a piece of cloth. The Mahātmā refuses the offer. Although the visitor makes the offer on his part the gift does not descend to the Mahātmā so long as the latter does not accept it. It descends to the Mahātmā only when at the repeated requests of the visitor the former at last accepts it. He congratulates himself on the Mahātmā having accepted his piece of cloth. When again instead of giving it to his attendants the Mahātmā takes the cloth for his own use how great should be the joy of the giver. Another visitor brings the present of a fan; the day is extremely hot. If the Mahātmā yields to his importunities for being allowed to fan him with his own hands, how great is his joy? The Mahātmā feels inclined to lie down and rest a while. The visitor requests him to place his head on his lap and lie down. If after repeated requests the Mahātmā accepts the offer how great is the joy of the visitor? Now if it be examined whether the object of worship here is a true Mahātmā (great soul) or only a pretender, it will be difficult to ascertain it. It is our high regard for the Mahātmā that gives us such immense joy. Similarly, if God whom innumerable Mahātmās have realized in their lives, condescends to make use of our body or even to hack it to pieces, how great should be our joy? The whole of our body should experience a thrill hitherto unknown. We should deem ourselves blessed if He decided to make a pair of shoes out of the skin of our body

and wear it. We should be proud to think that our body is being put to such a use, and shall be filled with gratitude to the Lord. A devoted wife feels happy in the happiness of her husband. She is filled with joy when her husband makes use of the body. Although she worships the husband as the Lord Himself, she knows that he is Nārāyaṇa (God) only to her. Between two intimate friends if the possessions of one are used by another as his own the owner of the articles so used feels highly gratified. All these illustrations have been taken from our ordinary life. Similarly, if God were to make use of our things or of our body, nothing could be a source of greater joy to us. The joy and happiness of the person who thus surrenders himself to God knows no limit.

When Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Arjuna and a lion, went to King Mayūradhwaja in the guise of recluse. He asked for half the body of his son Ratnakumāra for being offered to the lion. The King said he had no objection to this, but it was necessary to consult the Queen as well in the matter. When the Queen too gave her consent, both of them approached the son and wanted to know his pleasure. The Prince readily agreed to the proposal and deemed it a fortune to be of service to the recluse who he knew was none other than God Himself. The King and Queen took the saw in their own hands and began to split the body of the Prince into two. The Prince smiled and beamed with joy; for he knew the recluse to be God Himself. He had reverence and love in his heart and was beaming with joy. The King and the Queen offered their dearest object to God, but Ratnakumāra offered his very self. The King and Queen could not experience the same thrill of joy as the prince did. Observing a tear drop trickle down the cheeks of the Queen, the recluse refused to accept the hospitality of the King. The Queen then explained that she did not lament the death of the son; she regretted that only half the body of

the boy came to be of service to the Lord, the other half was not so fortunate. That very instant God revealed Himself before the blessed three. And it was quite natural that He did so. If we can develop the attitude of the Queen, all our possessions will be acceptable to God. Had anyone of the blessed three felt the least regret in the heart, the Lord would not have accepted the offering. An offering should be made with the greatest pleasure. God will manifest Himself the moment we develop the reverence of King Mayūradhwaja, his Queen and Prince Ratnakumāra. God accepts in His service him alone who offers himself as willingly and cheerfully as Mayūradhwaja did. He can ill-afford to refuse an offering made with such love as Mayūradhwaja brought to bear on his offering. Even Mahātmās (great souls) accept, when necessary, a present offered with love. They know that if it is not accepted, the poor soul who makes the offering, will feel disappointed. The Lord on His part has declared in no equivocal terms that He stands pledged to give protection from all creatures to him who surrenders himself only once and seeks His protection.* Take the illustration of piece of cloth belonging to a particular person: the cloth has surrendered itself to its owner. The owner may tear it to pieces, throw it away, burn it, spread it on the ground, cover himself with it or give it away to someone, it will not murmur: to whatever use the owner may be pleased to put it, it does not raise any objection. Whoever surrenders himself to God like this, will unhesitatingly submit himself to whatever use the Lord makes of him. Such a devotee attains salvation even though living. Although possessing life he submits to the control of the Lord as though he were dead. He would no more object than a dead body. He alone is a

* सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्ब्रतं मम ॥

Jīvanmukta (one who is liberated though living) who can, even though living, efficiently play the role of a dead man.

Such a liberated soul becomes fearless; he transcends all sorrows and attains eternal and everlasting peace. Such a great soul moves in the world only for our good. He has no obligation to discharge.

“He, however, who takes delight in the Self alone and is gratified with the Self, and is contented in the Self, has no duty.”*

He who has thus surrendered himself to God, lives only for the good of the people. Just as things which are the common property of a caste or a brotherhood can be used by any member of the brotherhood according to his needs, even so everyone may be said to have a right to derive benefit from that person. Such a person though living for others, will never entertain the idea that he lives and moves for the good of the world, much less will he say so. One who says so in respect to himself is a braggart; he can never be a liberated soul; virtues like humility, etc., appear in a liberated soul.

The eyes get sanctified through a sight of such persons, the tongue gets purified through conversing with them and mind gets purified through their thoughts. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of such persons have appeared on the earth from time to time. In the sacred regions of the Himālayas in the extreme north of India many such Ṛṣis performed their austerities in the past. These sacred spots naturally rouse the spirit of dispassion. One cannot adequately sing the glory of Mahātmās (great souls), who enhance the purity of these spots by their presence. If any boon has to be sought from the Lord, let us pray of him thus: “O Lord, give us strength and wisdom

* यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

to follow the footsteps of those exalted souls whose glory You Yourself sing." But what is the need of seeking a boon? One who surrenders himself to God and is accepted by Him can be instrumental in redeeming many souls, to say nothing of his own deliverance. About such souls the Lord says in the Gītā:—

"He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc., and is free from attachment, he who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to Me, that man is dear to me." *

God is exceedingly kind and benevolent. He showers His blessings on us even though we hardly deserve them, and loves His devotees as His very soul. A person who has realized this truth, cannot find rest even for a moment without seeing Him. The Lord Himself can give up anything for the sake of His devotee, but He cannot forsake His devout lover even for a moment.

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Failure to remember God at every moment of our lives and want of time to hear the songs of His glory is a matter of great concern.

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(Priceless Gems)

* समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥